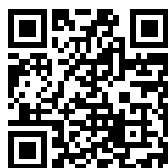
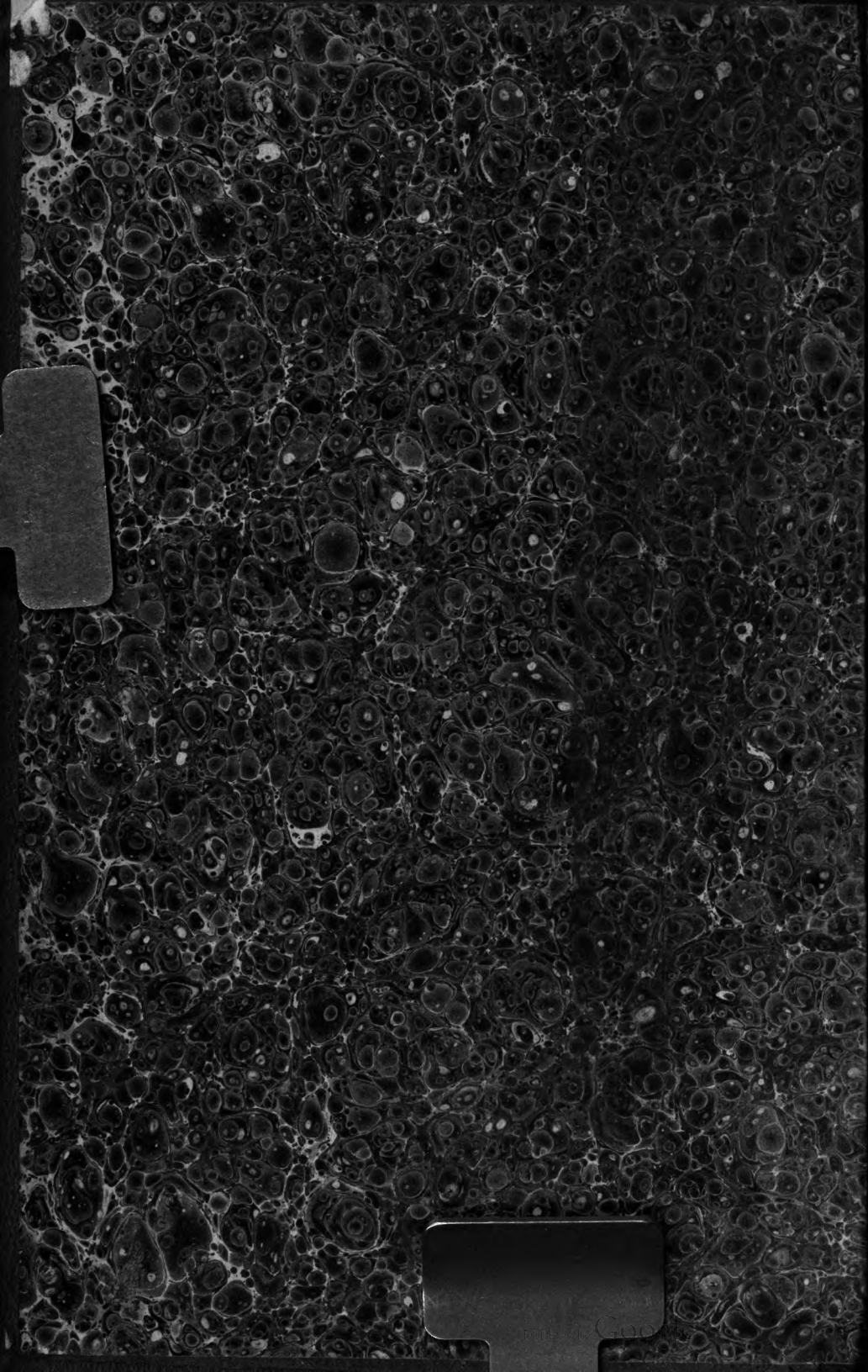

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<http://books.google.com>







1357. h. d.

SERMONS

PREACHED IN LENT 1845,

AND ON

SEVERAL FORMER OCCASIONS,

BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

BY

W. H. MILL, D.D.,

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, AND
PRINCIPAL OF BISHOP'S COLLEGE, CALCUTTA;
CHAPLAIN TO HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

PUBLISHED BY J. & J. J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE;

AND

F. & J. RIVINGTON, LONDON.

M.DCCC.XLV.



45.
1. 2.
20.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE first and the four last of the following Sermons were officially delivered by their Author at St Mary's Church: No. I. in his academic turn as "a Doctor of Divinity, not a Head," for the anniversary of the Queen's Accession in 1839; No. XXI. and all following by virtue of his appointment as a select preacher for the present year. The remaining eighteen were preached in the place of others: the xivth, xvth, and xviith of the series on an unexpected call from the Vice-Chancellor, to supply the absence of the select preacher of the month: the rest on various invitations from Colleges or individuals, to take the turns of those who were assigned to the several days in the Combination Paper.

Of this latter division of the Sermons, a considerable proportion, (about one half,) had been composed for very different ministrations in a distant country. It is in compliance with the wish of some esteemed members of the University that these are now given to the world, as well as those originally written for that academical audience, in conjunction with the four Discourses of February

1845. The notes on the first of these Sermons, viz. that for the Feast of the Purification, and that especially which relates to the novel dogma of the Blessed Virgin's immaculate conception, are inserted by particular request also. It may be proper to add that No. XII. of this series, the Restoration Sermon for the year 1842, had been published by request before: no copy of the separate impression now remaining.

BRASTED, KENT.

July, 1845.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

THE CLAIMS OF CÆSAR AND OF GOD.

(Preached on June 20, 1839, the Anniversary of the Accession of Queen Victoria.)

MATTHEW XXII. 21.

	PAGE
<i>Then said he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's .</i>	1

SERMON II.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

(Preached, July 12, 1840.)

MATTHEW XIII. 28, 29, 30.

<i>The servants said unto him, Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest</i>	26
--	----

SERMON III.

THE LORD AND BAAL.

(Preached on the Ninth Sunday after Trinity, August 16, 1840).

1 KINGS XVIII. 21.

<i>And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal be God, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word</i>	44
--	----

SERMON IV.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

(Preached on the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, August 30, 1840.)

LUKE XVIII. 9.

PAGE

*And he spake this parable unto certain that trusted in themselves
that they were righteous, and despised others* 62

SERMON V.

THE TWO SEPULCHRES AT BETHEL.

(Preached on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 13, 1840.)

2 KINGS XXIII. 17, 18.

*Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city
told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came
from Judah, and proclaimed these things which thou hast done
against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let
no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the
bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria* 81

SERMON VI.

THE FAITHFUL CENTURION.

(Preached January 31, 1841.)

MATTHEW VIII. 10, 11, 12.

*Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in
Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the
east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac,
and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the
kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness* 100

SERMON VII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES.

(Preached on the First Sunday after Trinity, June 13, 1841.)

JOSHUA X. 40.

*So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of
the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none
remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD
God of Israel commanded* 117

SERMON VIII.

THE REJECTION OF SAUL.

(Preached on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, July 11, 1841.)

1 SAMUEL XV. 28, 29, 30.

And Samuel said, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel: and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. PAGE
136

SERMON IX.

DAVID'S SIN AND CHASTISEMENT.

(Preached on the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, July 18, 1841.)

2 SAMUEL XII. 9, 10.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house 155

SERMON X.

THE SAMARITANS AND THE JEWS.

(Preached on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 5, 1841.)

JOHN IV. 21—23.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 173

SERMON XI.

THE SUDDEN COMING OF CHRIST.

(Preached on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19, 1841.)

MALACHI III. 1, 2.

PAGE

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. Behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? 193

SERMON XII.

THE GAINSAYING OF CORE.

(Preached on Sunday, May 29, 1842, the Restoration of King Charles II.)

ST JUDE, Ver. 11.

— *They have perished in the gainsaying of Core* 211

SERMON XIII.

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE RECHABITES.

(Preached on the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, September, 4, 1842.)

JEREMIAH XXXV. 18, 19.

And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever 238

SERMON XIV.

JOB PENITENT.

(Preached on the First Sunday in Lent, March 5, 1843.)

JOB XLII. 5, 6.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes 257

SERMON XV.

THE RELAPSED DEMONIAK.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Third Sunday in Lent, March 19, 1843.)

LUKE XI. 24, 25, 26.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first 279

SERMON XVI.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

(Preached on Midlent Sunday, March 26, 1843.)

JOHN VI. 3, 4, 5.

And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? 301

SERMON XVII.

THE ACCEPTED MALEFACTOR.

(Preached on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1843, A. M.)

LUKE XXIII. 39—43.

One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise 321

SERMON XVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN PENTECOST.

(Preached on Whit-Monday, May 27, 1844.)

Acts II. 33.

	PAGE
<i>Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear</i>	342

SERMON XIX.

CONFIDENCE TOWARDS GOD.

(Preached on the Second Sunday after Trinity, June 16, 1844.)

1 JOHN III. 21—24.

<i>Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us</i>	366
--	-----

SERMON XX.

THE HONOUR OF THE HOLY APOSTLES.

(Preached on St Andrew's Day, November 30, 1844.)

LUKE XXII. 28, 29, 30.

<i>Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel . . .</i>	384
---	-----

SERMON XXI.

CHRIST PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE, A SIGN OF CONTRADICTION.

(Preached on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
which was also Quinquagesima Sunday, February 2, 1845.)

LUKE II. 34, 35.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed PAGE
400

SERMON XXII.

SELF-DISCIPLINE THE SECURITY AGAINST REPROBATION.

(Preached on the First Sunday of Lent, February 9, 1845.)

1 CORINTHIANS IX. 25, 26, 27.

Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway 422

SERMON XXIII.

THE REJECTION OF ESAU.

(Preached on the Second Sunday in Lent, February 16, 1845.)

HEB. XII. 15, 16, 17.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears 446

SERMON XXIV.

CHRISTIAN LIGHT TO THE PENITENT.

(Preached on the Third Sunday in Lent, February 23, 1845.)

EPHESIANS V. 13, 14.

	PAGE
<i>But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light</i>	467

•

ERRATA.

Page 489, line 18, for *dicens*. read *dicens* :

..... 21, for <i>babere</i> ...	<i>habere</i>
..... 24, for <i>bonum</i> ...	<i>bonam</i>

SERMON I.

THE CLAIMS OF CÆSAR AND OF GOD.

(Preached at St Mary's, on June 20, 1839, the Anniversary of the Accession of Queen Victoria.)

MATTHEW XXII. 21.

Then said he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.

THE duty of Christians with respect to kings and civil government is among the most constantly and repeatedly inculcated by the first teachers of the faith. In many of the Apostolical Epistles—of St Peter and St Paul especially—the inculcation is most prominent; reminding the men of that and every succeeding age that the last great dispensation of God, which was introducing a new element of thought and action into the world, and as its inevitable consequence, a fermentation and collision of one part of society against another, was in its operation on all its sincere and earnest votaries, most opposed to every thought of civil discontent or confusion. Then, in the midst of persecution, and no less so assuredly in every other relation in which it should be placed to the powers of the world, its object and its essential character were quietness, submission and peace. And on this moral consideration is founded that

prescript to the first metropolitan of Ephesus, of which the characteristic form has been seen in every Christian liturgy from that time to the present: "I exhort that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings and for all that are in authority: *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty*¹."

The duty therefore, of which our Church on this anniversary reminds us, being thus sacred and perpetual, it might be expected that the Scripture, which teaches by example no less than by precept, should, in the records of all the successive dispensations of religion, exhibit instances of its observance, and warnings against its violation. In the history of the ancient people of God which occupies the Old Testament, we seem to have every variety of relation to the governing powers of the earth successively displayed to us. The patriarchal simplicity of their first condition under their heads, the chosen friends of God, is exchanged first, for subjection to the rule of Egypt and her absolute monarchs; secondly, for the theocracy or extraordinary government of God himself, when they are planted as His peculiar heritage in the land of promise; then, thirdly, when they desired to be as the nations around,—for the government of kings of their own nation and religion; and fourthly, at the era of the captivity, for that of the heathen monarchies of the Chaldæans and Medo-Persians, successively. Again,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

this Gentile rule, after three centuries of national restoration,—first tributary to the Persians and the Greeks, then wholly independent under their Asmonean and other monarchs,—is once more repeated in the domination of the Roman conquerors, republican and imperial. And in these several phases of their national existence, the command of the Almighty to them is substantially unvaried. Even under their Egyptian oppressors the direction “to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord²,” is adverse to their anticipation of that signal deliverance by any resisting act of their own. Under the theocracy, “to fear God, to believe Him and his servant Moses³,”—and, under the same high sanction, to revere and obey all whom God had set over them, was the unvarying rule of their political existence: and when God had “given them a king in his anger,” reserving the rights of the supreme direction by his prophets to himself,—the precept to fear God and honour the king, to reverence the sacred person of the Lord’s anointed, alike in a Saul and a David, is visible throughout in the prophecies and histories of ancient Israel. Again, when for their sins they are subjugated to the foreign monarchs that had destroyed their city and temple, the command by Jeremiah, Daniel, and others, is, “to serve the king of Babylon and live,” “to seek the peace of the city in which they are captive, and pray to the Lord for it; since in the peace of Babylon they should have peace⁴.” And though,

² Exod. xiv. 13.³ Ib. 31.⁴ Jer. xxvii. 17, xxix. 7.

upon their restoration, they had full rights as God's nation, to resist by active war as well as passive martyrdom the later Seleucidæ who would profane their temple and compel them to idolatry, the royal allegiance which became justly due to the worthy son of the Maccabees and his Jewish successors, whether good or bad, was rightly transferred again to *Gentile* rulers, as soon as the sovereignty and the sword of justice and protection was theirs. For such was the decision of the Incarnate Truth himself, when the question was proposed to Him in the days of his flesh by his insidious and fanatical enemies, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or not.

In the circumstances that made this question suitable to their purpose, no less than in the spirit of those that proposed it, we may trace the operation of those merely human traditions, which on this point of civil subjection, as on others, had corrupted the doctrine of Moses and the prophets. The leading persons concerned in this application were Pharisees, as the narration of St Matthew distinctly informs us: and from the artful terms by which it is prefaced, ostentatiously commending our Lord's fearless teaching in divine matters, the opinion of the framers of the question may be easily traced: they thought that a regard to God's honour, without any intermixture of worldly considerations, would infallibly dictate an answer in the negative. It is true that the courtly historian of the Jews in the time of Vespasian has laboured

to distinguish the tenets of his own Pharisaical sect from those of Judas of Galilee, who took arms on this ground, of the unlawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar: but we have too plain indications on the other hand of the actual opinion, which through the influence of their most admired teachers, had become prevalent among the Jewish multitude. We read it in the universal horror with which the profession and name of publican was regarded: when even a wealthy farmer of the revenue, such as was Zacchæus, notwithstanding the general respectability of that character in every other part of the empire, was held in Judæa to be, by the very nature of the office, a *sinner*: none but such could, in their esteem, so renounce the rights of a free-born child of Abraham, as to collect tribute for a heathen potentate from his brethren, the people of God. We see it, though less directly, in the degradation of the book of Daniel from its proper place among the prophetic books in the canon of Scripture, as received still among the Jews; chiefly on the ground of the acceptance of civil offices under the Chaldæan state, by the holy persons there recorded. This then was the style of sentiment which passed at that time for the only seriously religious one: nor was it the less so among the mass of the people, because the family of Herod and their adherents were concerned to think otherwise; a family of alien descent, which was upholden against the general prejudice of the Jews, chiefly by Roman influence, and which dreaded above all

things the national feeling of allegiance to the expected Son of David. That the Pharisees should unite to themselves on this occasion the opposite sect of the Herodians, as we read in the first two gospels, is no strange or unusual circumstance. Our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem a few days before as the Son of David, and his daily wonders in the temple, had exasperated and alarmed them both; and led them eagerly to seek that destruction, which they soon after succeeded in accomplishing. And it was expedient for their hateful object, that persons who took opposite sides on this particular question should appear to be concerned in propounding it: for the intention was either way to turn the answer to our Lord's prejudice. A negative answer would at once give them the opportunity they sought of denouncing him to Pilate, as an enemy of Cæsar. And the affirmative answer, allowing the lawfulness of tribute, would no less truly, as they hoped, compromise him as a religious teacher with the multitude; would shew him to be one, who so far from claiming their allegiance and tribute as the Christ, their promised King and Deliverer, confirmed and allowed their subjection to strangers, and allied himself even in this capital point with publicans and sinners.

How this insidious design was defeated by our Lord, the sacred text informs us. He discerned the equal hypocrisy and malignity of men who would make that a ground of accusation against him, which of all things they most desired them-

selves, the exemption of their nation from tribute; who would procure his condemnation by the Romans as a rebel against Cæsar,—whereas, if he had professed that character, and sustained it with vigour, they would themselves have flocked eagerly to his standard. And he found means so to answer their inquiry, as at the same time to evince their hypocrisy and to elicit the truth, in the sight of those multitudes with whom they sought to commit him. The coin which they with such affected conscientiousness scrupled paying into the Roman treasury, itself bore the emperor's effigy and legend, the mark of his sovereignty and their subjection: on producing this money, which they hesitated not to circulate among themselves in all matters of traffic and exchange, and obtaining from their own mouths the confession of what its image and superscription imported; the absurdity of scrupling to withhold from a sovereignty thus acknowledged, the necessary homage of obeying its impost, was then sufficiently manifested by the declaration, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's": as its consistency with the higher claims of the one supreme and unchangeable Lord of all is evinced by immediately adding, "and to God the things which are God's."

The sentence which confounded and baffled those blind guides of the people, extends further in its application than to the mere question in reply to which it was given. Since tribute here represents the whole of that allegiance of which it is an essential part and symbol, we may view our

Lord's sentence as embracing these two propositions: First, that there are certain duties which we owe to Cæsar, the sovereign power of the state, as such;—Secondly, that these duties, rightly comprehended, cannot interfere with those to which they should ever be united, the duties which we owe directly and immediately to God. These two propositions therefore now demand our separate attention.

Considering in the first place, the claims which civil government in the person of its supreme head possesses to our loyalty and allegiance, we may observe that the foundation of this obligation lies in the very nature of man and his condition in the world. The persons whose views are most opposed to those of the Christian church in this matter, are wont to consider the political state as an association of which every individual is a constituent member: nor have we the least reason to object to this view (which is an ancient and approved one), provided the nature of this society, and the circumstances of our membership in it, be properly understood and appreciated. This is not a society of which we contributed to the formation, or to which we can annul our relation when and where we please, as in the case of those minor associations for particular objects, with which it is now become so usual to assimilate it: we were born into it, and were partakers of its innumerable benefits long before we could think or choose or act for ourselves. In this respect the relation is as involuntary and necessary as that which binds us to parents and

kindred. As we chose not those who brought us into being, or whose tenderness watched over our earlier years; as little did we choose the political institutions under which, then and since, we have been protected from wrong or violence, our persons, dwellings and properties preserved in peace and security. The laws, whose salutary terror has thus kept the wickedness of evil men in check; the tacit recognition of them throughout the community which has alone given them the proper force and efficiency of law; the feeling of corporate relation which makes every individual in some sort an administrator of the law; all these circumstances, so essential to our well-being, we made not in any degree for ourselves: we have but to receive, and use, and transmit them (unimpaired or amended as we may, but at least undestroyed,) to our successors in the world. And therefore in this excellent constitution of things, without which the liberty we so much prize would be crossed at every turn by the same liberty in others, would be overborne by their wilfulness, or destroyed by their cupidity or malice, it becomes us to recognize the hand of God himself assigning our lot, and prescribing our relations to us; to revere this ordinance as His, and obey it accordingly, as the apostle declares "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake," with religious respect and affectionate allegiance.

But as it is not to a mere abstraction that the feelings of loyalty and allegiance can properly attach themselves, we are bound further, according

to that apostolic discourse, to hold our souls in subjection to the "higher powers" in the gradation of orders in the community, and to revere the supreme or sovereign power as under God the source of all¹. We need not forget that there are governments in the world, where sovereignty is exercised without such impersonation (or to speak more truly, without such *fixed* impersonation) in a monarch; and that these republican governments are likewise entitled to the dutiful obedience of those, whom God in his providence has placed under their protection and control. This however affects not us, who with the great majority of mankind, find ourselves under a system where the supreme power, to which all others in the state are subject and are referred, is expressly marked out as residing in an individual. Neither need we to forget, that of monarchies there are various kinds existing in the world; some like the imperial power to which our Lord in the text and his apostles bespoke obedience, in which the power of legislating, as well as of commanding and executing, is vested exclusively in the sovereign; others where these powers are limited, as in our own country, and where the constitution restricts the legislative power of the monarch to the confirmation or rejection of what has been agreed on by the other two estates of the realm,—by the lords and by the people's representatives in parliament. But in the limited, no less than in the absolute, monarchy, the consent and sanction of the sovereign is essential to every law

¹ Rom. xiii. 1—7; 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

or act of the State. All proceedings are in the name of the sovereign: the peace which lawless and wicked men disturb is described in our legal processes as the peace of our sovereign, of whose "crown and dignity" the secure well-being of all, from the highest to the lowest, is an essential part. And to invest this character, thus representing all the interests of the commonwealth, with the highest possible sanctity, the impossibility of the acts of the sovereign being judged or called to account by the subject is recognized as a sacred maxim of the constitution: that the person whose responsibility to the supreme Lord is thus close and awful, may have every possible support on the side of man. The security against abuse is sought, not in the right of judging that, which, if judged by the other powers, would no longer be sovereign and supreme, but in certain controlling principles to which the necessary ministers of the executive are subject. It is sufficient to allude to what is abundantly familiar to all: our province, in this sacred place, is to attend to the great law of civil obedience, as due to the sovereign in God and for God, according to His blessed word and ordinance.

The obligation to this is sufficiently declared in several places of Scripture. But if any one is tempted to imagine that to slight it is a trivial matter, let him weigh well the words of the apostle in the passage before alluded to. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever therefore resisteth the power,

resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." And what can be more conclusive than these words, "the powers that be," to shew that the Christian's obligation is determined, not by tracing the claims of every existing prince or dynasty to their sources, real or supposed, but by taking the social fabric as he finds it; and considering all rebellion against the sovereign power as rebellion equally against the peace, the welfare and security of all? To deduce the obligation from a supposed express compact between the ruling power and the people,—the latter being supposed proper judges of the degree in which the compact has been fulfilled by the former, and competent to vindicate their judgment, if need be, even by deposition, unrestrained by any other consideration than that of the physical force opposed to their wishes,—this doctrine is relaxing the whole bond of society as well as of obedience, and is as absurd and contradictory as it is licentious. It would be so even if the compact on which it pretends to found this license were a historical reality: whereas it is at best but an ingenious fiction, and, if intended to represent the true ground of the duty of submission, a far worse than useless one. It is clear, from all history and tradition, that governments did not arise in this manner; nor did man come to a state of civil incorporation (which as answering the ends of their being is really their natural state,) out of any such mutual independence and anarchy as this would presuppose. The monarchical power (as the sum-

mary of our duties in the decalogue indicates) grew first naturally out of that authority which parents and heads of families and tribes exercised in their several spheres as the human race extended itself in the world: the character of a necessary leader for protection and guidance (a "*shepherd* of the people," as the primeval language worded it) would supply a further ground for the relation; and the darker character of an aggressive conqueror supplied another. The imperial despotism of which Christ and St Paul speak, stood almost alone among the monarchies of the ancient world, in professing to found itself on a delegation from the whole people of legislative and administrative power: but the power was, upon their maxims, irrevocable by the Roman people themselves; while to all the world besides it rested on no other ground than that of conquest. But whatever might be the moral character of that conquest, or however justly or laudably it might have been resisted, while the old national government was in being; whatever the confusion or distraction of men's thoughts in the interval might be; still when the new dynasty really possessed the character, and exercised the functions, of a government;—when *its* power was that which was invoked to restrain evil-doers, and to protect the quiet and peaceable,—then allegiance to it became, on Christian principles, clear and irrefragable. It could not be questioned then,—far less in our happier government can the corresponding obligation be now questioned,—without contradiction to our only Lord, and rejecting the

saving discipline of his yoke from our hearts and consciences.

The name of liberty is greatly and justly dear to us: and therefore it may not be useless, before concluding this part of our subject, to observe how that stands related to the obligation we are now considering. Strong as is our natural desire of uncontrolled freedom, it is certain, however humiliating, that the first and most obvious need of mankind is restraint: that in a state of anarchy the conflicting motions of men's passions would be such as to force men to agree together to limit their personal liberty by permanent submission to some power distinct from their own. And it is only as men conscientiously comply with the obligations, whether towards superiors, equals or inferiors, which their incorporation into civil society imposes on them, that these restraints on individual wilfulness become less necessary with regard to them; thus only are they contributing, in the natural progress of things, to the growth and extension of that political liberty, the possession of which is indeed the greatest perfection and happiness of civil communities. Without a disposition to find our own in the general good,—in other words, without virtue, self-denial, charity and the fear of God,—the bestowal of greater liberty on a people is no blessing, but a curse: not the less so, if their unbridled passions blind them to a sense of evils, for which the return of a more stringent despotism were a desirable substitute. Common as it is, in the present time, to consider the rights which an ex-

tended freedom brings with it as simply benefits to the possessor, no thoughtful Christian will certainly so consider them, but rather as awful trusts and responsibilities ; of which he can never acquit himself well to his own happiness or that of others, unless he be himself free—free in a higher sense than the abusers of that term usually imagine—from the slavery of sin ; and not only from the grosser forms of vice and unrighteousness, but from the guilt and torment of vanity, envy, and discontent. How far the possession of this true freedom of Christ is qualifying us for the perpetuation and extension of that civil freedom with which we have so long been favoured, may well be a subject of doubt in thoughtful men, who watch the signs of the times, and the indications of the moral atmosphere around us. But as to what we very frequently hear, that all is necessarily progress—progress in the path of illumination, freedom and happiness,—in proportion as our monarchical constitution is broken down, and advances made towards republicanism, may not the contrary conclusion rather press itself forcibly on the minds of reflecting men at present? Certainly, the tyranny which some would prepare for us, which would subject all questions on politics and religion to the decision of the masses of mankind, and bind all men under the penalty of shame and contempt to acquiesce in that most inartificial and miserable test of right, the suffrage of a numerical majority ; this is far more intolerable to such as prize truth and freedom of thought, than any thing which

now threatens us from the opposite quarter,—from an authority possessing by ancient prescription the power of acting on behalf of the whole.

But the second head of inquiry, which our Lord's concluding words suggest to us, is, that beside the duties which we owe to the supreme magistrate, there are others which we owe to God. Not indeed that the former differ in the ground of their obligation from the latter; for all our duties resolve themselves ultimately into obedience to the will of God, and this to the human sovereign among the rest: as such I have endeavoured to treat it, and to collect the mind of God in nature and in revelation respecting it. But besides this, and every other duty of the second table, there is a properly religious duty which is directed immediately to God: this neither excludes the former, nor is excluded by it, but requires attention together with it, agreeably to the tenor of the words, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's."

The compatibility of these two duties, and at the same time their distinct nature, may be best seen by surveying them in the extreme case, when they partially come into collision with each other. For though that case is not directly contemplated by our Saviour here, and much less does it become us so habitually to contemplate it; the possibility yet exists that the requisitions of the supreme earthly ruler may interfere with, or oppose, the dues of God. Such a case occurred when the king of Babylon or-

dered his image to be worshipped; when Darius ordered his name to be invoked in prayer; and when the early Christians were commanded to blaspheme their Lord, and burn incense before the emperor's statues. In all such cases the obligation to obey Cæsar is superseded by that higher one in which alone it had its being: with the holy children in the furnace, with Daniel in the lions' den, with the blessed martyrs at the cross, the pile, or the amphitheatre, the Christian's course is to obey God rather than man; in His strength to endure all, to "resist," should the case so proceed, even "unto blood," rather than defile his conscience by compliance. But what is the nature and degree of that resistance which has the example of God's faithful servants to justify and enforce it? In no instance does it extend further than to the particular unlawful command from which obedience is withholden; never is it otherwise than a *passive* resistance, much less does it extend to declaring the allegiance of Christian people annulled to one who issued such impious orders, or summoning the godly to war against him as an enemy and oppressor of the truth. Such indeed have been the principles of two opposite sets of men in later times, the one of which had apostolical authority, the other apostolical purity, most in their mouths and professions; but such was not the patience of the saints, the real saints, whose death in God's sight is precious; such was not the true mark of that catholic Church of Christ, against which the gates of hell should not prevail. "Ye have con-

demned and killed the just," says St James, to the heathen magistrate; "he doth not resist you." "Being reviled, we bless," says St Paul; "being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." In conformity with these examples the martyrs of that and the succeeding ages died, praying for the emperors that condemned them, and commending the same loyalty and allegiance to all the faithful; no insurrection or resistance, even when their numbers might well have admitted it, impaired the purity of their testimony during three centuries of matchless trial and suffering; so truly was the cross of Him in whom alone they overcame impressed on every part of their demeanour, and the power of that saving name exhibited in the energy of meek obedience "before Gentiles and kings," to the utmost regions of the earth.

Such then was the strict compatibility of the duties to God and to Cæsar, at a time when the Church was an insulated body in the State, nay, when oppressed and persecuted by it; but when her own inherent organization, instinct with life through the Holy Spirit breathed into her by her Divine Founder, daily extended her bounds and influence among those who vainly sought her destruction. Such, I say, was the united religion and loyalty which Christians preserved, even in these extreme circumstances. Should then these duties be less united, when the State itself became Christian, when its kings, nobles and magistrates, joined to the Church by baptism, became heirs through Christ of that immortal life to which the word

and the sacraments were designed to educate and mature them? How must not the relation of the emperor to the Christian bishops and their flocks have been affected by the change which made him no longer, as was Nebuchadnezzar, or Cyrus, or Artaxerxes to God's people in captivity, the object of loyal respect indeed as the head of civil allegiance, but such rather as was David, Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah in the flourishing state of Israel; the supporter of God's true worship, the anointed shepherd and leader of the people of God? For as natural reason dictated even to heathen governors, that not barely the physical but the moral and religious well-being of their subjects were objects of their paternal care, would this obligation cease when, called from darkness into the marvellous light of God's truth, they found themselves the objects of prophecies which their ancestors knew not,—prophecies, announcing kings as the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers, of that enlarged Israel, which should be gathered from every clime and nation to serve the God of Abraham? The acts of Constantine and Justinian, Charlemagne, Alfred and others, shew how they received, and how they fulfilled, these predictions of the ancient Scripture. The endowment of sees for the extension and perpetuation of the faith, the convening of councils to secure its truth and purity, the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, and adding to the Church's purely spiritual sanctions, whenever temporal consequences were concerned in them, the requisite force of law; these

and other duties of the same kind devolved on Christian princes in that new condition of affairs which the recognition of Christianity by the civil power produced and perpetuated. And if we can scarcely estimate too highly the importance of those salutary provisions for enabling the leaven of true religion to work peaceably and quietly in times when the general confusions of the world seemed to threaten the subversion of all civilization, as well as religion; for humanizing gradually, by its silent and often unseen influence the mass of society, and leaving to future ages those monuments of religious faith and earnestness which yet meet our eye in every part of Christian Europe,—then should we learn to value, as it deserves, that union of regard to God and the king, which the state of established religion properly brings with it, and oppose, as far as we may, that strange perversion of intellect which sees in a conjunction, thus sanctioned by experience and Scripture, nothing but secularity and corruption.

For, after all, it is to no confusion of those different duties, even when affirming their union, that the true principles of the Anglican Church on this point conduct us. No true member of our communion is pledged to deny that essential distinction of the provinces of temporal and spiritual authority, which the general consent of catholic Fathers has found in our present text. In stating the Queen's majesty to be under God, over all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil, within these her dominions, supreme, the meaning is not to

assert any properly spiritual authority in the sovereign, not any share in that binding and loosing power which was committed to the ministers of the Church, and them only; neither is it to assert that where these functions are exercised by spiritual persons, either the validity of the acts or the right of those particular persons to exercise them, emanates from the sovereign as its source. Such invidious representations have been indeed made of our Church's meaning by enemies: either by Romanists, whose view of the power of their supposed universal bishop leads them to undervalue or oppose the just powers of the Christian magistrate; or by puritans, who, while seeking to subvert the existing ecclesiastical fabric by civil power, sought also to overbear all magistracies and all powers by a new discipline of pretended divine right, of which the ordinations and administrations were from themselves; or, lastly, by the more modern non-conformists, who, abandoning apparently all claims of peculiarly divine right in *their* discipline, and all censure of anti-christianism in ours, on which their forefathers stood, assert the totally novel and portentous right of separating from the Church, purely because established by the State. But it is neither by the representation of enemies, nor by misconceptions, however unhappily common, among some of her members, that the meaning of our Church on this point is to be interpreted, but by her own authoritative declarations: which abundantly disclaim these invidious statements, and declare "that *only* prerogative" to be meant which in holy

Scriptures has been always assigned to godly princes; “that is, that they should rule *all estates and degrees* committed to their charge by God, *whether they be ecclesiastical or temporal*, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers¹.” With all this the Church forgets not, but plainly inculcates, wherever her true voice is heard, that her power and commission is of God, and not of man; that she was founded by the Son of God, and by his apostles endued with power by the Holy Spirit; that none can execute spiritual functions within her, but those who actually derive from that source; for that these powers descend not by election or induction or presentation, either in the primitive times or ours, but by the consecrating and ordaining act of those who were previously thus consecrated by the apostles’ successors themselves. And while retaining this form and constitution, with the sound words and well-defined faith which have descended with it, firm and inviolable, she is conscious of being a true branch of that Catholic Church, which Christ’s promise secures from ever failing utterly from the earth;—she commits confidingly, and on principle, the guidance of circumstances affecting her temporal condition to that divinely sanctioned secular power, which other branches of the Church are obliged reluctantly, and sometimes against their professed principles, to recognize in practice. And while she thus renders to the Christian Cæsar what she sees there is the best warrant from the Divine Word for

¹ Art. xxxvii.

allowing to him, she trusts she cannot be refusing to God what is eminently and peculiarly his own.

It is true that circumstances are somewhat altered since the time when this religious character of the sovereign was most prominently put forth by our Church. The principle of ecclesiastical unity was then held sacred, as an essential element of national religion;—that of sectional or denominational Christianity, as men now speak, was utterly unknown. The latter principle,—I mean the recognition of the divided state, as if it were the right and proper state, of Christ's religion in the world,—is the growth of a later period; and humiliating indeed is it to reflect, that we could not learn to revert to the true primitive maxim of rejecting coercive intolerance in religious affairs, without at the same time unlearning a sacred truth, and adopting in its stead that most unscriptural principle; a principle which has already effaced from the minds of the many all sense of our sad deflexion from the old catholic spirit, and threatens also to obliterate, together with the desire of reunion, all sense of the objective character of religion itself, in the active and scheming men of the world. It is true, then, that there is this great difference of view in political men, since the time when the supremacy of the sovereign in ecclesiastical matters was first distinctively put forth: and, in consequence, some things that we may find in the writings of its early defenders, are in a manner obsolete now. We may even discern in some who were most remote from the Erastian

error of deriving Church power from the civil magistrate, a statement confounding rather than uniting the Church and the State in these realms, as if they were necessarily one and the same body, because, being Christian, they ought to be so. But to prove how utterly inapplicable is this theory to the actual condition of things, we need only point to the case of the northern branch of this empire; where the sister Church, with which alone we can hold communion, on principles common to us with the whole catholic Christian world, has been for a century and a half disowned by the civil power of these realms, and reduced to the same condition with the Church before Constantine. And we may find a more immediate proof in what is now within very recent memory among us, the obliteration of the last vestige of that state of things in which the societies of the Church and the State were regarded as identical—and that feast of the LORD, which is the sole appointed pledge of unity in the former society, made the symbol of official incorporation in the latter. Now in whatever light we view that state of things which our ancestors possessed, whether as a confusion of distinct things now far better separated, or rather as what is ideally good, but of which our profaneness and other sins had rendered us unworthy and incapable,—still it is idle to lament what it were equally hopeless and mischievous to aim at recovering. Our business is with the altered state of things in which it has pleased God to place us; to seek under it, and not any imaginary theory,

the sanctification of the whole body politic by the Church. It is now most inexcusable to confound in idea two things ever essentially different, but more easily identified in time past, the provinces of the State and the Church ; or, what is the same thing, the provinces of Cæsar and of God.

Still may we use in faith the prayer for all estates which our academical usage requires us to adopt ; and, while inviting united supplication for all the commons of the realm, continue to pray that in sincere and conscientious communion with the Church established among us, they may promote, by Christ's own appointed means, the brotherly love and Christian charity incumbent on all. Should this spiritual communion be unhappily still denied us, we may yet pray for the next best gift that charity could desire, viz. a heart-piercing sense of the unhappiness and the evil of our present divisions. Let our prayers ascend to God, the source of all unity in peace, for all ranks and orders in our Christian commonwealth ; for her especially who in the State is supreme : that her counsels and proceedings be guided not by the wisdom of the world, which cometh to nought, but that which animated a David and a Josiah of old—a dutiful regard to God's will ; the spirit of faith, zeal, humility, and charity. Thus, with the same spirit diffused through all inferior orders, may we hope that the ills we dread be averted, and happier times than our sins have deserved be the portion of our Church and nation.

SERMON II.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.

(Preached at St Mary's, July 12, 1840.)

MATTHEW XIII. 28, 29, 30.

The servants said unto him, Wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay: lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.

THE deficient correspondence between the present appearance of the Church on earth and the declared purpose of its Divine Founder, is a very common subject of remark, and according as men's tempers incline them, of disappointment or of reproach. Viewing, on one side, either the stupendous magnitude of the means by which our redemption was effected, or the high terms in which the proper objects of that redemption are delineated by the inspired writers, the comparison with what we actually find on the other side in the existing household of faith, can scarcely fail to excite in earnest minds something of both these sentiments. The spouse of Christ is announced in Scripture as "all glorious within;" her children are "all righteous;" they are "a holy nation, a peculiar people, set forth to declare the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light:" "they

have no need to teach each man his brother to know the Lord; for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest amongst them :” they are “the light of the world, a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid.” Now wherever in any degree these characters of holiness and illumination are found, there, it may be said, we are willing to recognize them : but what are we to think of the vast residue, whose state is a contradiction and plain mockery of this? It is confessed that the Son of man hath sown good seed in his field : whence then hath it tares?

The effects of this impatient process of thought in undisciplined and partially instructed minds are matter of ordinary observation. No age of the Church is without some share of them : and ours has its full proportion; much more indeed than could belong to it, if its boast of transcendent light and knowledge of religion were a well-founded one. The conclusion drawn by such persons is, that the existing Church cannot be that which the divine predictions embrace or contemplate; that what is thus copiously mixed with evil, however it may trace its rise to the Son of God, must be of merely human original; and that since these human means have failed of securing the purpose which God designed, the resource is to invent and try other means for that purpose. With the prouder and more daring spirits, the course accordingly is to strike out some new and specious heresy; with others, to frame some plan of sectarian exclusion, by which the field of God, may be, as it is imagined, kept more free from the noxious intrusion of tares.

Thus they proceed, even when it is evident to all, that the admixture of evil is not, and cannot be, wholly precluded by such methods; while to the scandals previously existing, the new and formidable one is added, of religious proscription and uncharitableness. Greatly indeed is the preceding confusion aggravated by these self-willed modes of proceeding: they tend to disturb and unsettle yet more grievously the weak Christians; who ask, where, amidst all this, is the holy community which the Saviour founded on the earth?

Now, to meet this perplexity, it is surely welcome and consoling to discover, that this state of things is not, as was suspected, unpredicted in Scripture; Christ has not left his people unapprised of it, or unprepared for it. Of the remarkable series of images, filling this thirteenth chapter of the first gospel, by which He illustrates the nature of his spiritual dispensation, two are peculiarly devoted to this point, the mixture of good and evil in the Church: both are adapted to rebuke and forbid that impatient dealing with the evil, which is, notwithstanding, so natural and accordant to many minds. One of these is that which closes the series in question, and runs thus: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which when it was full, they drew on shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace

of fire." The other is the parable now before us, of the field in which, while the proprietor sowed wheat, the enemy sowed tares; and in which the desire of the servants to root up the tares, was answered as we find in the text. The explication is not immediately appended to this parable, as to the other, but follows when, on the multitudes departing, the disciples say to their Master, "Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." The reply is: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that soweth them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." On the doctrine thus emphatically propounded to us by our Divine Teacher, let me now offer a few observations; as it respects the origin of the two classes here mentioned, and the right manner of proceeding with regard to them; together with the consideration advanced in my text, as the ground and motive of so proceeding.

And first, with respect to the origin of the two

classes here denominated respectively wheat and tares, we should observe that it is *the kingdom of heaven* which is thus compared to the sowing of seed in the field; and this is the well-known term used throughout St Matthew's gospel, (as the term kingdom of God is in the others,) to denote that dispensation of God's grace in the world, of which the future reign in glory is the completion—the commonwealth of the children of God once scattered abroad, but since gathered together as one body under one head, bearing the name of Christ as their King and Lord, ruled by his will and authority, united together by his sacraments. Now as all men are created by one God, and are in that sense naturally his children—as the prophets of uncorrupted Gentilism concur with apostles in testifying¹—so all who are admitted to Christ's Church by baptism, and translated to it from the state of sinful nature into which Adam's transgression had consigned mankind, are, by that admission, children of the kingdom, heirs of God by adoption and grace. Any terms of this parable which might seem to contradict this latter proposition, might just as easily and as literally be urged to contradict the former, *i. e.* to prove the Manichean doctrine, that while one part of the intelligent creation is the offspring or emanation of the good deity, the rest is the offspring of an evil one. But undoubtedly the doctrine of Christ allows nothing of that kind to hold either naturally or spiritually; and when he assures us, that

¹ Acts xvii. 28.

those who profit by His graces are alone truly children of His kingdom, while the wicked Christians are children of Satan, he means that not their substantive being or faculties, but all by which they are wicked and fitted for final condemnation, is the work and implantation of the apostate spirit in them; while everything that is good in any, and effects their growth to everlasting salvation, is, equally with their being and substance, from the Father of lights, bestowed on them in and through His Son. It is a great and most necessary rule in the interpretation of parables, that we must not press the analogy of the material object in spirituals further than the purpose for which it is specially adduced in illustration; for by doing so, it were possible to make each parable to contradict almost every other. Were we to infer from the comparison of wheat and tares, that the elect and reprobate, who are thus denoted respectively, are therefore from the very beginning as absolutely untransferable from one state to the other, as they will certainly be when this state of probation is over, we should be grossly abusing the illustration: we should be contradicting the whole gospel of Christ, and every parable by which either the apostasy of the good, or the conversion of sinners to God, is distinctly declared and propounded to us. The illustration is evidently directed to this point only, that there is a growth in grace to salvation, and there is a growth in corrupt nature which issues in final damnation: that all men within the visible Church of Christ are subjects

either of one growth or of the other, and must direct their hopes and fears accordingly. This awful proposition does not contradict—its full consideration rather presupposes and implies—another truth equally certain; viz. that as all, even the best Christians, have that within them from the first Adam by which, under the tempter's influence, they might finally perish in sin; so have all, even the worst Christians, received that by which through the second Adam they might be rescued from sin, and saved. The calling of God is wholly directed to this: His kingdom of grace is framed to prepare men for it: and while the term "children of the kingdom" is in this parable used of those only who verify that blessed character to themselves by accepting and using God's grace, we may recollect a passage in the same gospel, where "the children of the kingdom" are said to be consigned to outer darkness, whilst others once in darkness are made children¹. Notwithstanding, therefore, the failure of the present material illustration as it regards *this* point, we may say with truth spiritually, that the tares of the field continue such only in despite of that culture of God which would make them different. His language to every part of his field in the gospel, is the same which He addressed to his Hebrew vineyard of old: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes²?"

¹ Matt. viii. 11, 12.

² Is. v. 4.

Understanding, therefore, in this scriptural and catholic sense the statement now before us, that the tares are the children of the wicked one, as the wheat are the children of God's kingdom, we may direct our attention exclusively to that point which this parable is designed to impress upon us,—the co-existence of the two in the same external brotherhood, and the possibility of their so continuing, each party retaining and developing its proper character, until the irreversible day of final doom. We have, in the first place, steadfastly to view the *fact*, as the divine Author of our salvation here propounds it: and we may regard all revelation, even from the beginning of the world, as concurring with, and establishing his declaration. Even from the first promise of grace, when enmity was declared between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, to issue in the Divine Redeemer who should bruise the serpent's head, the truth began to be illustrated. Of the two sons of Adam, who was the son of God, the second only spiritually realized that character: the first-born Cain, notwithstanding that high original, *was of that wicked one*, says St John, and slew his brother; he slew him because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. If we pass from the father of mankind to the special father of the faithful, we find the state of things under the gospel adumbrated or allegorized, as St Paul informs us, in his two sons, the one the child of the bondwoman, which is carnal, the other born after the Spirit, and the child of promise. And in the offspring

even of Isaac, the heir of promise, ere that promise is made general in the whole seed, a signal type of reprobation is pointed out by prophets and apostles, in his firstborn, the unhappy Esau, who profanely forfeited his birthright. When Israel has inherited the promise, and transmitted the privilege to all his posterity, and God, remembering his covenant, has redeemed them from the house of bondage, to enter on the inheritance promised to them in Canaan; we see in the multitudes that left Egypt, and were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea, who all partook of the celestial manna and of the rock which was Christ—an image still perpetuated of two classes journeying together in the visible Church of God, yet opposed in character and fates; the murmuring and disobedient perishing in the wilderness, the faithful Joshua and Caleb entering into their rest. And in all the subsequent history of the people of God, the same essential difference is throughout manifested: there is no prophet or faithful servant of God whose character is not at the same time contrasted and proved by the opposition of his wicked countrymen, all dwelling in the same sacred territory, and partaking the same divine ordinances and legal privileges with himself. The last crowning illustration of this was in the days of the Messiah, when the seed of the evil one assumed an attitude of more deadly malignity, in proportion to the splendour of the light and truth which they opposed, and the fangs of the serpent were fixed in the heel of the Son of man

who should conquer him by suffering and death. Still was the fight continued, and with unabated fierceness, against the followers of Christ; who in the cross of their Master, and by patient endurance, should overcome. As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, so was it, as the apostle declared, in his days, and so should it continue¹.

Now when this opposition of good and evil, which, beginning with the Jews, Christ's kinsmen according to the flesh, was at first extraneous to His special fold and family, should at length find its way *within*, as his words express, and as the apostles declare it to have begun even in their time; what is then the duty which devolves on his followers? This is our next enquiry; and to this the answer is express in our Lord's parable now before us. The duty is, patient acquiescence in this state of things, and looking for the complete rectification to the day of judgment. With this direction the Lord of the harvest silences his too zealous servants, who ask his orders to attempt the total extirpation of offenders from the body. He blames not their zeal, nor does he deny the desirableness in itself of what they propose: he only tells them it is a work to which they were unequal; which, if they seriously attempted, they would defeat their own purpose, and effect more harm than good. For undoubtedly the sufferance of even a great admitted evil is a thing far less to be deprecated than the excision of any thing that

¹ Gal. iv. 22—29, &c. &c.

is really good: and this—not only the imminent danger, but the certainty of this,—would be the consequence of attempting the entire extirpation of the evil. The two are too closely set together in God's field of the world,—their roots are too interlaced and twined together,—to allow of their total separation being safely attempted while the present life lasts. He said, "Nay: lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them."

But here it may be necessary to obviate any misinterpretation of our Saviour's words by applying them to what he does not forbid, but rather requires in his faithful servants. And first, we must not consider our Lord as interdicting all exercise of the power of the keys—of that spiritual discipline which he himself committed to the Church, even in the extreme case of excommunication and excision; when the offence is of that certain and manifest kind which constitutes the offender an evidently unfit member of his body. That duty, even under the old covenant, was one the neglect of which in Eli, a high priest and judge, was visited with the most signal and terrible punishment; it is one which David, a prophet and king of Israel, expresses in the 101st Psalm his intention of executing with unsparing fidelity, as a necessary mark of his integrity and perfect heart with God: he will destroy all the ungodly of the land, that he "may root out all wicked doers from the city of the Lord." Now abstracting from this what belongs to the civil magistrate, or what, re-

lating to the outward state of Israel, is not properly committed to the ministers of Christ's kingdom as such; yet, as their spiritual power is more extensive than any conferred in the ancient dispensation, to bind and loose on earth what should be bound and loosed in heaven, assuredly what was first so solemnly conferred on St Peter, as representing the apostolic College, and again after the resurrection so repeated to the apostles collectively, could not be intended by its Author as a *brutum fulmen*, the exercise of which was wholly prohibited. That such was not the case, we have stronger proof than any mere inference can supply. We find St Paul sharply rebuking the presbyters of Corinth for allowing an incestuous person to remain in their communion; he tells them, that though it is for God alone to judge the heathen who are without the Church, it was his as an apostle of Christ, it was theirs as His subordinate ministers, to judge those that are within; that they should therefore put far from them that wicked person; that gathered together with his own spirit, in the name and in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, they should deliver him to Satan by cutting him off from the communion of Christ's ordinances,—both in hopes that the sense of his dismal state might awaken him to condign repentance, and save his soul in the day of the Lord, and also in tender care of the souls of others whom the leaven of that pestilent example might infect and destroy. He tells them again in the second Epistle, after that abomination was removed, that if he had occasion to come again, he should not

spare; that they should witness an exertion of that apostolical authority with which Christ had invested him for the edification, and not the destruction of His body¹. In the best ages of the Christian Church, the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline in the removal of scandals and vices, excluding lapsed persons from communion, and requiring substantial proofs of penitence before their re-admission, was never deemed inconsistent with charity; nay, rather it was charity to the souls of the flock entrusted to the bishops and pastors, that prompted and required its exercise. And though this discipline became laxer in after times, and in our own age there are obstacles of a formidable kind against its renewal in that form, our Church concurs not in the judgment of those who esteem this state of things the more proper or the more healthful one. In the first day of Lent she annually repeats her regret of this lost portion of the godly primitive discipline: and in hopes of its restoration, repeats, meanwhile, as her best practicable substitute, the declarations of God's wrath against sinners; declarations in the faithful remembrance of which there is the best safeguard against presumptuous offences, and which no one that truly loves God, and the souls of his brethren, will be so blind as to think uncharitable.

And as the patient acquiescence enjoined by Christ does not mean suspension of ecclesiastical discipline in those to whom he has given the authority and the means for exercising it, in the case

¹ 1 Cor. v.; 2 Cor. ii. vii. xiii.

of flagrant and notorious offenders, whose character, as belonging to the tares and not to the wheat, is altogether unequivocal,—so neither does it denote any indifference to others' vices or sins, any connivance or mental allowance of them, under the plea that God alone is judge, and that we have no concern in such matters. The precepts and example of the Divine Saviour himself are the best proof that such could not be his meaning. The law of charity even under the Law declared, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him ;" and the severe invectives which the holy prophets of old ever uttered against the iniquities and offences of their several times, are exceeded in earnestness and vehemence by His declarations who came down from heaven to redeem and purify us. And though the Christian is in all cases directed to look principally and constantly to his own path,—though the judgment and censure of others is not his province, and reproof even of plain evils is a duty by no means incumbent on all,—though few cases exist in which reproof of a superior is proper, and that of an equal or inferior requires always to be moulded by temper and charity,—yet is the servant of Christ not to spare when he appears in a character higher than that which is personally his own: he must dread lest, by neglect of suitable caution or warning, he himself incur the guilt of an unfaithful watchman, and a partaker of other men's sins.

Where, then, if this censure of scandals is not forbidden, is that patient acquiescence in existing

evils, which our Lord's parable so clearly and strongly enjoins on us? The answer is not a very difficult one. Whatever be the magnitude of the evils from which we ourselves study to be free, in which we decline all participation open or implied, and against which, with all charity to the persons of others, we protest by our example at all times, and, when proper occasion requires, by our express denunciation,—we are not, in the first place, to suppose that these evils, because unextirpated, are sufficient to neutralize the Church of God in which they are found, or to make the divine promises respecting it ineffectual. It would be hard to conceive of any condition of the Church more lawless than was that of Israel in the period of the Judges,—more desolate and apparently hopeless than during the Babylonian captivity,—more corrupt and overrun with noxious spiritual disorders than in the generation to which Christ himself came. Yet in the very worst of these times we know that God's covenant and alliance were unrepealed; the means of approach to Him subsisted, however clouded with difficulty, yet sufficient to the faithful that used them; and if the unworthiness of the many did not then frustrate the divine gift and calling, as the apostle has argued the case before us, so neither can it now. Again, we are not to think that offences of an undefined nature, which different habits of thinking will cause even good men to apprehend differently, ought to be met in the same manner as plain and tangible offences against the laws of God and man; still less are we to define, on grounds of

this kind, who are tares and who are wheat in the visible Church—a question which, in the immense majority of cases, is utterly beyond our power to solve, and known only to Him who searcheth the heart and reins. Bearing therefore perpetually in mind this difficulty, or rather utter impossibility, and the awful denunciations of our Lord and his apostles which forbid us, as we would escape judgment ourselves, to arrogate to ourselves the office of judges of others; our course, when even serious offences or scandals come under our observation, is not to undertake the rectification without a clear and manifest call of Providence to this work; never, unless perfectly convinced of its practicability as well as its necessity; never to seek, in an exclusion which necessarily condemns and proscribes the innocent with the guilty, a remedy far worse than any evil it would cure; still less to withhold Christian communion from those by whom in our opinion, whether that opinion be well or ill founded, the offence might be removed, and is not. Thus, when in an early age of ecclesiastical history, an extensive and most uncharitable separation was made from the general Church, on the single alleged ground of a prelate being recognized whose conduct was said to have deserved deposition,—it was urged against them from our Lord's word in these parables, that the charge, if ever so true, could not justify their schism: it was their duty, however they might condemn the offence, to bear with the evil as one which the day of judgment would rectify; and not proceed on the chimerical pre-

sumption, that the net of Christ's Church caught good fishes only, or that the wheat in His field must be wholly unmixed with tares¹. We need not point to more recent examples of a similar error, the immediate or remote consequences of which are felt in the state of our religious history even now. Rather would we turn to the examples, which all, even the least catholic-minded amongst us, would agree in recognizing. Those who looked for redemption in Israel in the days of Zacharias and Elisabeth and the blessed Virgin, did not withhold their worship at God's house, and participation in all ordinances of his prescribed worship, because of the abuses and offences then existing, far greater and more grievous than can be possibly pretended among ourselves. They worshipped at his holy temple, where Pharisees and publicans could meet, not heeding the money-changers that sat in the courts. If their piety was offended, as it doubtless was, by

¹ Non ideo Ecclesiam negligimus; sed toleramus quod nolumus, ut perveniamus quo volumus, utentes cautela præcepti Dominici, ne cum volumus ante tempus colligere zizania, simul eradicemus et triticum. Utentes etiam exemplo et præcepto B. Cypriani, qui collegas suos foeneratores, fraudatores, raptos, pacis contemplatione pertulit tales, nec eorum contagione factus est talis. Unde et nos si triticum sumus, ejusdem beati Martyris verba fidentissime dicimus; "quia etsi videntur in Ecclesia esse zizania, non tamen impediri debet aut fides aut charitas nostra; ut quoniam zizania in Ecclesia cernimus, ipsi de Ecclesia recedamus." Hæc verba justissime ac piissime dicerent majores nostri, etiam si Cæcilianum et aliquos coepiscopos ejus malos viderent, quos tamen ab Ecclesia separare non possent.....hæc verba omnino dicerent, hoc omnino sentirent, ne cum vellent temere zizania separare, simul et triticum eradicarent.*Ager est enim mundus, non Africa: messis finis seculi, non tempus Donati.* [S. Augustin. ad Donatistas post collat. cap. 20: et contra literas Petilian, lib. iii. cap. 2.]

their intrusion, their conscience was not ensnared by it, (as by a falsely styled tenderness it would have been), as though the guilt of these men or of the rulers extended to all. They looked to this and other like instances as evils which He who should visit his temple would in due time rectify; they possessed their souls in patience, expecting His coming to Israel for deliverance and for judgment; pursuing in the meantime meekly, without officious interference, or censure of things beyond their reach, their own career of unostentatious daily obedience. Thus they served God in his house and at home: and they were blessed in their choice and deed far beyond the exclusive Zealots, or the Essenes of the desert. Even thus may that spirit be restored to the Christian Church which Christ at his first coming pronounced and made thus blessed; which retains and cultivates that peace of God to which we are called in one body; which is thankful, without censure and contention; which, while sitting in judgment on its own conduct, is sensible throughout of its own deficient powers even for this², without entering into unauthorized judgment of others; which “judges nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.”

² 1 Cor. iv. 3—5.

SERMON III.

THE LORD AND BAAL.

(Preached at St Mary's on the 9th Sunday after Trinity, August 16, 1840¹).

1 KINGS XVIII. 21.

And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal be God, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

THE acts and the fortunes of God's ancient people Israel are exhibited to us, even in the last and most perfect record of the Divine will, as sources of abundant and perpetual instruction. They are exhibited as the great model of the Almighty's proceeding both with nations and with individuals—with those most emphatically and specially whom he has favoured with the means of peculiar knowledge, and admitted to a covenanted relation with Himself. Their Exodus from Egypt, the commencement of their national existence, their march across the desert, as the very remarkable Epistle of this day² has reminded us,—with all the leading events of their subsequent history,—all, it is said, happened to them as en-

¹ First preached in India, Aug. 8, 1830.

² 1 Cor. x. 1—13.

samples or patterns of general application; and they are written for our admonition most eminently, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

If this then be the case with every part of the Hebrew history, the life of that great prophet and reformer of Israel, who speaks in the words I have just read, cannot be among the least interesting or important. Few names are more often repeated in the sacred writings of the New Testament than that of Elias. If an example is to be given of trust in God in times of difficulty and adversity, of constant fidelity, of immovable resolution, of instant earnestness with God in prayer and intercession for his apostate people, it is the venerable Tishbite who is thus held out to the early Christians throughout the apostolical epistles. It is he who in the gospel is the prototype and exact resemblance of the great forerunner of our Lord: thus was that precursor foretold by the last of the Old Testament prophets, and thus was he announced by the angel at the beginning of the New: the greatest praise of him who was "a prophet and more than a prophet," was that he should go before his Lord *in the spirit and power of Elias*. This Elias was moreover the type and figure of our Lord Himself in the great event of his ascension into heaven. And further, on that holy mount where the Lord was transfigured, and displayed in anticipation the glory to which He should re-ascend before the eyes of the chief of

the apostles, it is Elias who is associated with Moses as an attendant and active participator in that scene. The great witness and assertor of forsaken truth, the reformer of Israel, is alone thought worthy to stand by its first teacher and legislator, where both are to wait on the Lord of all before He is offered up,—to confer with Him in glory on these coming events in which the law and the prophets were alike completed.

“The spirit and the power of Elias,” to which alone such splendid distinction is attached,—a spirit certainly imparted to him from above, since himself was, as the apostle St James observes, a man of like passions with ourselves,—this spirit and power was nowhere more remarkably exemplified than in the events recorded in that chapter of the book of Kings from which my text is taken, and which was the first lesson of this morning. I propose to consider with some particularity the leading points of this narration, connecting it with the preparatory and attendant circumstances; in order that we may, by God’s blessing, fully enter into the meaning of that appeal in which the chief moral of the history lies, and be enabled to trace the intended application to ourselves.

It was to the kingdom of Israel, that is, of the ten tribes, Ephraim and the rest, as distinguished from the kingdom of Judah, comprising but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, that the labours and testimony of this great prophet were directed. How this, the largest portion of God’s inheritance,

whose whole, name therefore of Israel it took, was led into a general apostasy from the true worship of God in his sacred hill of Sion, we learn from the earlier chapters of this book. The apostasy was a consequence, but by no means a necessary or inevitable consequence, of the previous defection from David's house under Jeroboam; for it was committed in despite of an express assurance of God to that prince, that by continuing to regard His worship at Jerusalem, notwithstanding the separation of the kingdoms, and by observing His will in all things, his throne would be prospered and secured like that of David. The opposite course, to which an obvious policy led Jeroboam, that of setting up a rival centre of religion in his own kingdom, lest the sympathy of a common worship might lead his people back to their old lords, well represents the deductions of human wisdom when set against the wisdom of God, and the mistake which civil rulers necessarily commit whenever they imagine themselves institutors, instead of what they really are, divinely appointed protectors, of the Church of God: a Church first planted in the earth, not only without the aid of the temporal powers, but against their strongest efforts for its suppression. The natural course of evil is strongly marked in the subsequent history of that ill-fated kingdom, down to its last hopeless and unredeemed captivity under the Assyrian conquerors, Tiglath-pileser and Salmaneser: it is visible alike in the progress of the sin itself and in its punishment. The man of Ephraim who, in

the hope of perpetuating his newly-acquired royalty by an irreligious policy, both sinned himself and caused Israel to sin, has, in the very next generation, his dynasty and house cut off: and a stranger of the tribe of Issachar usurps the place of the sovereign he had murdered. He again, when he treads in the steps of Jeroboam's grand apostasy, is punished similarly in the person of his son and immediate successor, who is miserably assassinated, and the whole house of Baasha extirpated. And then, after a turbulent struggle of several parties for the monarchy, a military chief of Samaria becomes the head of a third dynasty in this kingdom, after its separation from the house of David. But far from ceasing from the original sin of idolatry which brought down these successive plagues on his predecessors and their kingdom, Omri and his family fearfully aggravate it. At first, it had been the design and policy of Jeroboam and his successors to keep the new worship at Dan and Bethel to some kind of mimic resemblance of that which was performed at Jerusalem, and had been divinely revealed to Moses from Mount Sinai. Even when the calves are set up, the object attempted to be symbolically connected with them, is the sacred obligation of the people's redemption from Egypt by Jehovah the Lord God of Israel; even as it was in part when the first error of this kind was committed by Aaron himself, at the people's suggestion, in the wilderness¹. But the command of God and

¹ Exod. xxxii. 4, 5; 1 Kings xii. 28.

His instituted service once set aside, there was nothing to prevent a deluge of the worst idolatry and corruption afterwards rushing in. And such an influx actually took place in the reign of Ahab, the next in succession; a prince who even in this bad number has a pre-eminence in impiety, and who began his evil career by an unhallowed alliance with Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. This king, as we hear indirectly from the Phœnician annals preserved elsewhere, was distinguished, even in his own pagan line, as a priest of Astarte²: his daughter Jezebel therefore may be well conceived more than ordinarily attached to the rites of that worship with all its detestable accompaniments,—more than ordinarily zealous to carry them with her into her husband's territory in Israel. Such is in fact the unenviable distinction, by which her name is regarded by the people of God as a symbol of all that is encroaching, polluting, and abominable in false religion. Under these auspices the worship of Baalim and Ashtaroth, the impure and sanguinary deities of Tyre and Sidon, are introduced upon those high places, where formerly was only an unauthorized and prohibited sacrifice to Jehovah the God of Israel. The abominations of this new worship were such as the darkness of guilt is ever ready to imagine pleasing to the unknown and dreaded powers above it, whom it invests with the same characters and attributes as the too usual possessors of power amongst men; they are such as

² Menander Ephes. ap. Joseph. contra Apion. lib. i. cap. 18.

a crafty priesthood, instructed to work on the religious fears and moral corruptions of man, can readily accommodate to the depraved inclination of those who have lowered their gods to the level of themselves: they are such also, as if to shew most powerfully the inefficacy of all human power and wisdom in procuring divine light, as have been found most prevalent in conjunction with the highest ancient science and civilization: for thus were the people of Phœnicia distinguished, as well as those of India and Egypt. This detestable worship is now introduced generally among the people of Israel: the altars of the LORD are thrown down, and the prophets of the LORD slain with the sword; and Elijah the sole prophet, at least the only known and declared prophet that remains, wanders a desolate exile, while the prophets of the groves fed at Jezebel's table are four hundred, and Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. But the power of the Almighty, never more conspicuous than in such seasons as these, signally supports His faithful and intrepid confessor. His judgment in withholding rain from the apostate land visibly accompanies the prophet's word; and an awe of the person and character of that prophet is impressed on the mind of the impious monarch, though not in the more hardened mind and determined will of his foreign consort.

Here then occurs the event of our first lesson. When the man of God, overruling the timidity of the pious steward of Ahab's household, himself

ventures to the king's presence, and offers to put the question, who is the disturber of Israel, on the issue of a challenge which he offers to Baal's priests, Ahab has nothing to urge against the proposal thus made to him, and summons those priests, with the prophets of the groves, to meet Elijah accordingly. It is then, when the whole congregation of Israel is assembled on Mount Carmel to see the issue of this trial of strength between the servants of the LORD and of Baal, that the question of my text is proposed: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" "How long will you consider it as an uncertain or evenly balanced matter, whether the Lord Jehovah, the covenanted God of your fathers, who brought your fathers from the house of bondage, and led them through the wilderness to this place, and caused them to inherit the lands of their enemies, with blessings innumerable, which they knew not and could not procure for themselves,—whether He be indeed, as he has said, the Lord of all the earth, or whether that be the attribute of these new and strange divinities?" The people are silent to this appeal; their minds acknowledging the reasonableness of the admonition, that decision on the one side or the other is incumbent on them, but resolved apparently to make that decision dependent on the event of the trial they are to witness. The trial takes place, and it were needless to repeat its circumstances: the senseless cries and sanguinary self-tortures of the worshippers of Baal are alike ineffectual; and the God of Israel is approved to the faith of all

who witness His fire descending and consuming the sacrifice of His servant. The people shout that Jehovah the LORD, He is indeed God: the false prophets, whose impious worship had troubled and seduced the land, are adjudged to death: and the rain that had been so long withholden is now successfully invoked by the prophet, in presence of both king and people, in a territory where the true God of heaven was once more acknowledged.

So much then for the history of this event. Let us now proceed to its application. For the rebuke which the prophet's appeal implies of the apathy and indifference of his people on a point of such momentous interest to them, as that, whether the LORD or Baal were the God they should follow, does not certainly belong to them alone. It belongs to Christian nations to consider well the duty of recognizing Him who claims undivided sovereignty over the hearts and conduct of all; to ponder well every step by which they may depart from that undivided recognition; to consider well and deeply, whether the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Church and ordinances have been so conspicuously fixed among us for twelve centuries past, be indeed the source of their wisdom, their moral power, their blessing, and true prosperity,—or whether that may be partly claimed for any divinities whom other generations would substitute for Him, whether mammon, or expediency, or purely human reason. It belongs to individuals, in whose collective choice the heart of a nation lies, and whose public and private duties in this

matter it were vain and injurious to separate,—it is for them to answer this question, each for himself, in the recesses of their chambers, in every part of their walk and conduct in the world, as well as in their confession in the Church; whether the God in whose name they were baptized,—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—be the God whom they will follow, or whether they will be led by the opposing principles of the world, the flesh, or the devil, whom in His name they have once solemnly renounced. And the state of mind of numberless Christians as to this question, infinitely more resembles that of the people who “answered not a word” to the prophet, and were unwilling to commit themselves by any reply whatever to his appeal, than it does to the warm declarations of the self-same people soon after, transient and inefficacious as they proved to be,—“The LORD, *He* is God—the LORD, *He* is God.” It is a question which many scarcely know how to propose to themselves; and which many more, when they do partially apprehend, seem content to leave unexamined and unanswered altogether.

Yet the question is not the less necessary in itself, nor the less tremendous in the alternative it involves. Whatever be the shades of good and evil by which we are accustomed to define characters, till they verge by gradations, each almost imperceptible in itself, from the height of virtue to the depth of depravity;—however apparently true may be the estimate of indifference attached

to the intermediate shades of character, when referred to the unsubstantial scenes and shifting relations of this life;—still be it remembered that the process and its result is very different, as it will be declared in the final judgment. To the trial and discipline of life there are but two great issues attached,—that of the righteous, and that of the wicked: he who is not of the former class decidedly and determinately, however imperfectly, must belong to the hopeless and unspeakably wretched condition of the other. And such must in fact be the fast maturing character of those who halt, and are really indifferent to the great question just stated. There is much need here to guard against self-deception: a deception most easy when there is no longer, as in the days of Elijah, or the early times of Christianity, any very striking external difference connected with the side on which we are ranged of this alternative. It needs indeed no formal proof now to evince to us, that if we live in the practice of known or secret immoralities—if we violate any decided rules of temperate, of just, and of godly conduct,—we are aliens from the life and the hope of Christianity: though even here self-deceit can go very far towards persuading men otherwise. But to be resolved that there shall be nothing in our lives of an obviously offensive or scandalous nature,—nay, to be resolved that we will live according to the rules of Christian virtue, as far as the regard of the world and our own convenience and pleasure are secured by it, with a

reservation (not perhaps equally express or avowed, but no less certain and decided in the interior resolution,) that whenever these rules of life cross each other, the law of God is to yield to that of the world and our own heart,—this, it is to be feared, is a very common state of mind and purpose; and it is one in which we may not imagine much evil or moral pravity to be concerned: yet certainly as that Christianity is true, this is the broad way which leadeth to destruction. It is not the state of grace to which our baptism introduces us, nor in which we have the aids of God's Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us. He who thus purposes is in darkness, and (in proportion to his consciousness of purpose) in wilful determinate darkness; having no heart or wish to open himself in unreserved obedience to Him that seeth in secret; desiring by Him to be cleansed from all faults, whether secret or open, which impede the way of salvation: and it is only as we thus walk in the light, as He is in the light, that we have fellowship with Him, and with other Christians, and that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Such indeed is the infallible dictate of inspiration on this point. But we are not therefore to conclude that this real fellowship with Christ's body, which unreserved obedience alone secures, is a matter of direct mutual perception to all; or that we may judge with certainty, who are living and who are dead members on that vital stock. It is one of the most signal points in this history,

specially noticed by St Paul in his epistle to the Romans, that the number of the really faithful in Israel was far greater than Elias had conceived, known only to God the searcher of hearts, and not revealed to His prophet before his earnest expostulation recorded in a subsequent chapter. "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword : and I, even I only am left." But notwithstanding the untoward appearances that made him conceive himself the only faithful person remaining, what, says the apostle, is the answer of God to him? "Yet I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal¹." If it was not then possible, much less can it be in a tranquil and settled state of the Christian Church, to mark with absolute certainty, which are the wheat and which are the tares, growing up within the same field, intermingled and undistinguished from each other. Great and essential as the difference must ever be, between the dead and the living members of Christ's mystical body, between those who derive from Him their nourishment, the maintenance of the new life they received at baptism, and those who renouncing it in effect, live according to the course and the maxims of the evil world, still is this difference for the most part a hidden one.— We have indeed in some of the best an unambiguous impress of the lineaments of Christ ; as

¹ Rom. xi. 2, 3, 4 ; 1 Kings xix. 13—18.

in many, too many of the worst, a copy of the lineaments of Satan: though even among the former we cannot tell who will certainly persevere in goodness, nor whom among the latter the grace of God may not yet call again and convert. But of the far greater number, the precise present state is undiscernible to all but God, how they are verging towards the one or the other state—the state of the elect or the reprobate—how far, and under what oppressions and dangers, the secret life of the Spirit, hidden with Christ in God, may be fast extinguishing, or else unfolding and maintaining itself within them. And all attempts to reverse this state of things, which Christ assures us must continue till the harvest, at the end of the world, is either vain, or worse than vain: as its cause lies in impatience and defective acquaintance with God's word and our own hearts, the consequence in practice is ever mischievous. For most certainly we may be assured that it is not by setting up separate standards of belief and profession, or creating a new visible society within that holy one which should contain us all, and partly superseding it, that the living branches are distinguished from those which are destined to be plucked off and burned: it is, as Christ and his apostles strongly declare, by their fruits; by their faithful use of those advantages, which in respect to the engrafting on the same root, were common to all. It is by fruitful adherence to his commandments that we abide in

Him, by the steady and constant obedience of faith: even thus were the Israelites that persevered and entered Canaan distinguished from those who murmured and fell in the wilderness, though all were alike baptized, as our inspired teacher this day emphatically assures us, in the waters of the Red Sea; all did eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink. And therefore in that sacred feast which the rock and manna of the desert but imperfectly prefigured, in which the Incarnate Son gives His flesh and blood, once sacrificed, for our perpetual spiritual sustenance, it becomes us more especially to see that this bread of heaven be indeed our nourishment, and not our bane, by examining well our state of mind and purpose; to see that Christ be in us, lest we be reprobates,—that we are indeed following him in faith and obedience,—seeking, through the unspeakable mercy there exhibited and bestowed, for that fuller incorporation into His body, which His holy mysteries, duly received, will actually impart to us, and which will fit us for his celestial banquet hereafter.

But there are those who shrink from such immediate contact with their most sacred obligations; and on grounds scarcely explained to themselves, wish to remain at a greater distance from them. Such is the state of mind which the absence from the eucharistic table indicates in thousands: a state in which they do not choose to declare whether they mean to devote them-

selves at the altar to the Lord who bought them, or not. Is not, then, this state the very halting denounced by the prophet, in the appeal before us; a state which cannot possibly remain fixed as it is, but must be eventually, perhaps even rapidly, modified, either for better or for worse? The worst issue is easy and natural: nothing easier than to pass by degrees from indolent postponement of amendment to confirmed despair of it; or from a somewhat uneasy acquiescence in irreligion, to confirmed satisfaction in it: while the better issue can be obtained but in one way,—by direct submission to the searching light of God's truth. To avoid the deadly evil of progress in the downward path, there is but one resource; pressing home to ourselves immediately and practically the question, which master we will serve, whose wages and rewards we expect. To decide this in the settled plan of our lives, and to carry it into the whole detail of practice, is what constitutes the Christian's daily business; the subject of every morning's prayer, and every evening's review of his conduct.

With this question therefore thus proposed to each, individually, I would now conclude. Whatever be the principle which any one among us may prefer in heart to follow before the God who created, who preserves, who sustains him,—who brought us at first from nothing, and recovered us when we were worse than nothing,—who redeemed us at an infinite price in Jesus Christ, who

regenerated and appropriated us to Himself in the holy font of baptism,—who has surrounded us with wise laws, holy discipline, good examples, venerable and time-hallowed institutions,—and who offers Himself to us, in all the fulness of grace, in His Church and sacraments;—let him be assured that the rival principle will fail, it will disappoint, as well as fatally mislead. Its pleasures and its toils issue equally in sorrow; the troubles and anxieties it will multiply will be as ineffectual to future peace or safety as the knives of Baal's worshippers, or the self-immolations to Moloch; and whatever be even the appearance of goodness which may, in the present stage of our being, belong to one who follows this rival principle in preference to God, most certainly, when that stage is withdrawn, the appearance will be such as to vindicate the justice of the divine judgment in this matter,—to shew the soul that was thus guided to be destitute of the substance of real virtue, of all that is required to sustain it in happiness to eternity, and fit only for abodes where the light of God's blissful presence can never penetrate. Let the choice then be now made in the calm deliberate survey of these things. If the LORD be God,—if He who created and redeemed be indeed the arbiter of your whole being and destiny,—if He alone is careful for you, and loves and desires your welfare,—then follow Him in the way to which He graciously invites you, in which He has aids abundantly sufficient to support your steps, to direct and prosper you to

the end. If the world or the flesh be God,—if they can supply you to eternity with what the wants of your immortal being require,—if even now they can satisfy in prosperity, or console in disappointment and sorrow,—then indeed follow them. Otherwise be true to your Christian engagement, and renounce them as masters utterly.

SERMON IV.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the eleventh Sunday after Trinity, Aug. 30, 1840.)

LUKE XVIII. 9.

And he spake this parable unto' certain that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

A SENTENCE like this, prefixed in the inspired gospel to our Lord's parable, not only declares the occasion on which it was spoken, but explains its entire scope and intention. All the contrast exhibited between the two descriptions of worshippers, that are denoted severally by the Pharisee and the publican, with the judgments passed respectively on their spirit and their success with God, all must be directed to this end, to shew the folly of so trusting in ourselves that we are righteous as to despise others; in other words, to place before us the evil of self-exaltation and self-confidence, with the contrary benefit of self-abasement and humility.

To this purpose I would invite your attention to the successive circumstances of the parable contained in the gospel appointed for this day. "Two men," says our Lord, "went up to the temple to

pray." It is the unspeakable mercy of God, not only to allow, but to invite and command us to express our feelings and our wants to Him in prayer: a still further mercy, that he provides us with places in which we may thus approach him in a peculiar manner, and without distractions. In the Mosaic dispensation, under which these two men lived, there was an earthly sanctuary for this purpose, constructed after the fashion and similitude of heavenly things, as revealed to the lawgiver of Israel on the mount of Sinai. This sanctuary possessed, in its Holy of holies, an image of the LORD's inaccessible residence in the Heaven of heavens; but into the surrounding courts His people were admitted according to their various degrees of legal privilege and sanctity, to approach Him with prayer and praise; to rest upon that covenant of which the memorials were in the ark of the inmost sanctuary; and thus to look, even then, beyond the figures of heavenly things that surrounded them, to the eternal rest yet reserved for the faithful people of God. And now, since the outer court of that house, the court of the Gentile proselytes, from which Christ expelled the traders that desecrated it, is expanded into a house of prayer for all nations, as he then declared, and Isaiah had prophesied before, a far greater effusion of that blessing is now ours. What was before the peculiar possession of Jerusalem, is now become, and that in a higher and more intimate sense, the privilege of every place throughout the world: that is of every place which possesses the memorials

of Him that once tabernacled amongst us in human flesh, and is now, after being sacrificed for our sins, exalted on our behalf to the Majesty on high. Great, then, is the privilege everywhere,—great, especially, is our happiness in the temples that represent God's altar and mercy-seat and living way of approach through Jesus Christ,—to come before Him thus in prayer; to pour out our hearts before Him who is our sole hope and refuge and security, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Hence, even in their more obscure and imperfect dispensation, a due consciousness of their eminent privilege was ever manifested by those Jews who dwelt near the holy mount of Sion: who needed not, like the Psalmist at a distance, to pant for that blessedness, and envy the birds their portion, who could nestle near the sacred altars; or like Daniel in Babylon, to open the windows of their chambers towards Jerusalem, when the hours of stated prayer arrived, and thither direct their meditations. The Jews thus fortunately situated, ever shewed, at least in their external conduct, a high sense of their peculiar happiness. Three times a-day were their public prayers directed towards that veiled seat of mercy, where the LORD fixed his name and special habitation; and beside the stated hours of solemn worship, there were, at every other hour of the day, some faithful and devout persons to be found, engaged in separate acts of confession and adoration. If *our* stated prayers are less frequent,—and if the last use of our temples be

almost laid aside,—relinquished, as if it were a portion of little worth, to our unreformed Christian brethren, who make abundantly this use of their churches,—is it not a sign, that in this respect at least, we have no reason to boast of greater purity and spirituality than theirs? We certainly depart from the theory and the right practice of our holy branch of the Church Universal, if we accustom ourselves to consider churches as weekly lecture-houses in religion, instead of what they are really, *houses of prayer*: houses intended especially for this, the appropriate, never-ceasing business of a Christian; shewing by their very construction, which we inherit from the first ages of Christianity, our entrance to the Holy of holies as opened to us once for all by that one great sacrifice which the Christian altar ever represents and exhibits to the faithful. And while in their lofty elevation above other buildings, and their abiding permanence, while these perish away one by one, which in successive ages encircled them, our churches remind each Christian of the fixed permanency of his true home above; they should likewise give him the opportunity, apart from the distracting associations of the world and its concerns, to breathe for a while the air of his celestial country; and to ask of God, through His Incarnate Son, the character and the dispositions that will safely convey him thither.

But we must not wander from the subject now before us, to which these considerations are however by no means foreign. “Two *men*”—they

are as yet called by that name only, in which all of every degree stand equal before their common Lord—"two men went up into the temple to pray:" they entered severally the court of the Israelites out of the hours of stated worship, in order to perform this excellent duty of private prayer; a duty which might well become every place, but which was peculiarly appropriate here. And of these men, "the one was a Pharisee, and the other a publican." On the light in which the latter class of men were regarded in Judæa, it were superfluous to dwell. It was to be expected that the feeling with which the Jew regarded the Roman conquerors, should be reflected, even with peculiar bitterness, on those of his own countrymen who made themselves the instruments of foreign exaction; and that this feeling should not be removed, as it ought to have been, by the thought that these men were the necessary servants of the state. But to this ordinary national feeling was added in the case of the Jews a peculiar religious intensity: the persuasion was most popular and general, that for the free-born children of Abraham, it was unlawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, or any heathen government; and the Jews who could so far forget their sacred character, as to be the collectors of such tribute, or to inform against their countrymen who paid it not, hence came to be regarded with horror as sinful men,—apostates from the character and profession of true Israelites. Hence also these same persons, who had embraced, for the sake of gain, an occu-

pation which they knew to be thus odious and disreputable in the eyes of their most esteemed countrymen, were apt, according to the usual course of human nature, to sink to the level that was assigned to them, to become such as their neighbours expected men of their profession must be, and thus add to the old prejudice another less unjust and more insuperable, by the profligacy and occasional dishonesty of their practice. Such then were the publicans. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were men whose exactness in the observance of the law was proverbial among the people, indicated by their very name, which denoted their separation and preeminence over all others in this respect: their garments were bordered with phylacteries, or large bands of parchment, in which texts of the law were written, to express how eminently sensible they were of its importance and excellency, that they carried it always about with them, and in their worldly transactions never lost sight of it. In the streets and public places of the city they gave their alms before men, a trumpet being blown beforehand to proclaim it; and they were seen there, ever and anon, to stop and to make long prayers. Hence, therefore, to say of these two men, that the one was a publican, and the other a Pharisee, is to say that one passed among the people necessarily for a sinner, the other necessarily for a saint. How they were viewed in this respect by the Almighty who sees the

heart, the remaining incidents of the parable may enable us to determine.

“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess.*” Such is his confession before God; one in which we discern certainly but few characteristics of a prayer: it is a profession respecting himself and his own conduct, only slightly prefaced by an ascription of thanks and praise to the Almighty. But we should analyse more minutely the points of this confession, in order to understand the real character and views of the speaker.

This man thanks God that he is not a practiser of vices to which others were addicted. It may admit of doubt, whether he thus confessed, in common with most Jews even of his sect, and even with the better heathens, the existence of a Divine influence disposing the heart invisibly to righteousness,—an influence which should accordingly be sought in prayer, and acknowledged in praise,—or whether in the words, “God, I thank thee,” he only recognized God’s agency in the Pelagian sense, viz. His outward providential agency, in so arranging the course of events as to facilitate the avoiding of those fearful moral evils; while the disposition to avoid them was considered as wholly man’s own. But even in the lowest sense of the words, if he *truly* thanked God that

he was not an extortioner, unjust, or an adulterer, he was undoubtedly so far right: and if such had been the tenor of his confession, omitting the intermediate words of this clause, and the part immediately following, we might not have found anything positively wrong in his prayer, defective and partial as it would still be. It is matter of thankfulness for any of us, if God has happily kept from our path in life the occasions of sins like these; in which thousands have been entangled by circumstances, before they were aware: still more, if our hearts are inclined, as nothing but His grace can incline them, to hate those vices in themselves as they are odious to Him; if we really love the law of God, and abhor from the heart the thought of transgressing it, either by injustice, or by criminal indulgence. This view is common to the Jew and the Christian; though it need scarcely be observed, what eminency of truth it has to him who has received the gospel: since it is only through the power of Christ resting on us,—through the might of His Holy Spirit inhabiting and suggesting good to us,—that the sources of corruption are staunched within; that the old man is thrown aside, who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that new man assumed, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Whether this view, as far as it was possessed by the good of the elder dispensation, were in any degree the view of the Pharisee, will be best seen when we consider the other features of his

prayer. Meanwhile it is but justice to him to suppose, that the thanks he renders to God for those negative points of virtuous living, are to be extended also to the very few positive ones that he afterwards enumerates. To these therefore, before we proceed to the condemning point which Christ observes in his confession, it were well that we should pay some attention.

“I fast twice in the week.” Was the Pharisee wrong in doing this? or in thanking God, as he does, that he was inclined and enabled to do it, even to this high degree of strictness, beyond what the law absolutely required? Many, if they would speak what is in their hearts, would reply that he was: but they speak without warrant of the divine word, and wholly from their own prejudice and recent traditions, if they answer thus. If the material act of the Pharisee were wrong, then was Christ wrong, who both performed the same exercise, and gave rules for His disciples’ performance of it, without affectation or ostentatiousness: who has told us that some evil possessions are to be ejected by no means beside this; and that though it was not the time for the children of the bride-chamber to fast, while His visible presence cheered them; yet the time for their fasting would come, and would continue, when the bridegroom should be taken away, and His unseen supports alone were left to feed their faith and charity. Then was the universal Church also wrong, which, according to these sure testamentary words of her Lord, has

from the first given that exercise a marked place amongst her prescribed means of piety; and which has added, what is most needed, stated times for that, which without such call on the attention, would not ordinarily be performed at all: extending it not only to its principal yearly season, when the anniversary of His cross and passion is at hand, but in a lesser degree into every week. Our Church unites with the apostolic Church of all ages and nations, in making the week-day of the Lord's death, a day of abstinence; as the day of His resurrection, the Lord's day, is her weekly festival and triumph. Thus in respect of frequency, she adopts half of the Pharisee's rule: though she has not equalled it, by adding any other day to the Friday; either, with the past and present Eastern Church, the Wednesday when He was sold to his enemies; or with the later Western Church, the sabbath or Saturday when He rested in the grave. Now though this exercise had not, among the ancient Israelites, that fulness of consolation and blessing with which the meditation on Christ invests it under the new dispensation; yet had it its blessing and reward in both, if performed in a right spirit and intention. If dissevered, as the prophet Isaiah enjoins, from the errors which a hypocritical generation too readily associated with it,—and connected as a suitable and inseparable companion, with penitent self-condemnation and self-punishment, with the relief of the needy and oppressed,—then is this exercise far removed from superstition or erroneous

religion : it has its blessing both for the present and the future ; and He that seeth in secret will reward it openly.

Whether such were the Pharisee's fast, we may observe in the sequel : but he adds lastly, " I give tithes of all that I possess ;" *i. e.* not only from the gross produce of the land, out of which the law exacts this portion for religion and its ministers, but from everything, however minute, that at any time becomes my property,—from mint and anise and cummin,—I scrupulously measure off and lay aside a tenth part for the same purpose. Here also the material act of the Pharisee is unquestionably right : nor is there the same need, as in the other case, to vindicate it, even to the present generation. It is confessed that to promote religion, is to contribute to the consolation of the wretched, the direction of the prosperous, the holiness and happiness of all. Therefore, in zeal for such an object as this, for the honour of God, and the welfare of His people, to go beyond the absolute requisition of the law cannot but be an object of commendation. The deed is good : and if the motive be such as to correspond to the deed,—to be in heart and purpose coincident with it,—the performer of the deed is good also.

But that such was not the case with our Pharisee, the whole tenor of his so-called prayer sufficiently informs us. There were Pharisees who, while they tithed all the minute things they possessed, neglected, as Christ has said, "the weightier matters of the law,—judgment, mercy, and faith :"

and there is nothing in this man's profession, supposing it ever so sincere, of exemption from great crimes, and scrupulous attention to one of the means of grace, in abstinence and bodily mortification, which should prevent us from concluding that such was also his case. It is not, however, his defective enumeration of duties, that enforces on us the certainty of this conclusion respecting him. Rather is it the wrong feeling that runs through every part of his prayer: the feeling which leads him, in the two positive duties he mentions, to lay his great and principal stress, not on the general benefit of his right practice, but on that point at which he conceives it to exceed that of others; and which, in the negative part of his profession, impels him to what is still worse,—to impute the crimes from which he was himself free to other men generally, and to his fellow-worshipper; to begin and end his pretended thanks by denouncing them.

The want of humility is therefore the first condemning feature in this Pharisee's confession. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." But by what right does he introduce the consideration of *other men*, as objects of comparison with himself, when he is approaching the presence of God? The first sentiment of religion is the sense of our infinitely greater nearness to God than to any other being whatever; the consciousness of that all-pervading piercing scrutiny, before which our best self-inspection shrinks to nothing; how much more the very defective in-

sight that we can attain at best into the motives and characters of other men? Before the light of God's presence penetrating him, to which in the act of prayer he opened and resigned himself, should not all idea of judging others be shamed from manifesting itself, when his own character and conduct were presented before his Maker? If right, as he doubtless was, in imputing it to God's grace, that he was not an extortioner, unjust, or adulterer; should not his apprehension of the all-seeing Judge have tempered his thankfulness here with awe and humiliation? If restrained from extortion, had he never coveted for his own what belonged to another? If he had committed no injustice, was he free from the inward workings of discontent and envy? If no adulterer, had his thoughts been free from every stain of impurity? And considering that his study of the Divine law had been beyond that of ordinary men; his means of improvement, and consequent responsibilities, far greater than theirs; might it not have occurred to him as a possibility, that in him, the motion of envy or cupidity, and the neglect of the further attainments in virtue which opened before him, might bear a deeper stain of sin in the eyes of the heart-searching God, than the actual extortion or injustice or impurity that he either saw or suspected in others? If human considerations only prevented his carrying out evil dispositions into act,—if the desire of securing the respect of men were stronger than the fear and love of Almighty God,—was

not this most certainly his case? And where then was the ground of that self-exaltation in the comparison with which he begins and ends his confession?

But this want of humility, with respect to God and his fellow-creatures, which makes him blind to all defect in himself, and void of all desire of purifying grace from the heavenly throne he is approaching, is accompanied, as it ever must be, with an equal want of charity. Without this, the bond of peace and of all virtues, an Apostle has told us that the very best deeds, the highest and most arduous manifestations of faith and devotion, are utterly worthless and displeasing in the sight of God. And the want of this quality,—nay, a very high degree of uncharitableness and disdain of others—pervades this man's confession. Far from the spirit there described by St Paul, which vaunteth not itself, and seeketh not its own, which hopeth all things, believeth all things, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, while it rejoiceth in the truth,—this man never imagines in other men any qualities but such as are evil; the suspicion of others better than himself never interferes with his disdainful comparison with sinners; and he shews evidently, that could he be translated to the society of Angels and blessed spirits, the feeling would be intolerable to him, of finding none with whose conduct he might advantageously compare his own. How should a man of such a spirit obtain praise and blessing from Him whose tender mercies are over all His works,—who invites all

men, without distinction of rank or education or attainments, to come before Him,—who is long-suffering even to the unthankful and the evil, causing His common blessings to descend on all,—who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance?

But the worst exhibition of the Pharisee's pride and uncharitableness, is that which respects his fellow-worshipper. We will suppose, as in justice to him we must suppose, that the occupation of a publican was in his eyes an unlawful one; that the man appeared to be a sinner of necessity by his profession, and most probably abandoned and dishonest in his practice. Yet the sight of such a one coming into the temple for the mere purpose of approaching God, might and would have inspired a good man with hopes concerning him. And when the publican, standing afar off,—as thinking himself unworthy to stand with the rest of God's worshippers,—would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, being self-abased and self-annihilated before the majesty of Him whom he was approaching,—and smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" though his words were inaudible to the Pharisee, as they were meant to be, yet his demeanour, his attitude, and posture, might have been marked by him. They must have been seen, as the publican is so present to the mind of the Pharisee in his prayer: yet, instead of imparting to him the benevolent interest that a just man should ever take in a sincere penitent, these marks of humiliation seem to him only evidences of the

crimes and guilt of his fellow-worshipper; they only furnish further materials for his own proud self-complacency, and enable him to complete his favourable comparison by saying, "I thank thee that I am not as other men, *or even as this publican.*" But far different from this vain estimate of the self-confident worshipper is the decision of Him to whom he thus presumed to address himself. The man whose prayer to the Almighty was so remarkable for all the features in which the other was wanting,—the man who realized the Divine presence and inspection, and spread his full wretchedness before Him without a word or thought of extenuation,—who never compares himself with others more guilty, or pleads their evil example in arrest of judgment, but asks of mere mercy what it is for Divine mercy alone to bestow,—“this man,” saith our Lord, “went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

To apply this subject to Christians might seem an obvious thing: yet it is not so easy as it might be at first sight imagined. The more general appreciation of what becomes the worship of God and our relations to him, which Christianity has introduced into the world, leaves men apparently in little danger of adopting the direct sentiments of the Pharisee in their addresses to heaven. Yet, so long as the spirit which animated him exists in the fallen nature of man, it may take its shape accordingly: and it is certainly an

error to imagine that by renouncing the opinions that either are or appear to us to be the doctrinal sentiments of the Pharisees on fate, or free-will, or justification, we secure ourselves from the danger of resembling them. For the spiritual pride which was their characteristic may lurk under the humblest theory of religion; supposing even, what is not always the case, that the view, presumed to be humble, is such in reality. The religion, whatever be its theory, of which the main effect is to establish in the mind a persuasion that there is something in ourselves that belongs not to others in Christ's brotherhood and family,—which makes the predominant feeling of any to be to thank God that he is not as other men,—is in great danger of engendering also the worse points of Pharisaism. The remedy for this is to meditate on the universality of the Divine goodness; to consider the great benefits which are open to all the baptized household of Christ, and thence to reflect (not on general depravity, which ministers no humiliating thoughts to any, but) on the peculiar sinfulness of our own neglects and miscarriages amidst so much mercy; to think but little of our virtues, and much of our vices; to check every emotion of self-complacency on comparison of ourselves with others, by reflecting that this may be a talent to be accounted for, instead of a gain that we have secured; to abstain from judgment of others, while we are severe to ourselves; and, with respect to those real faults and sins of others which we cannot but perceive, ever rather to pray for their

amendment, and hope the best possible concerning them, than to find here a ground of self-gratulation at their expense. Without these humbling considerations ever present with us, and penetrating us, every meditation on the good which we have done, or the evil which we have been able to avoid, must partake of a pharisaical character.

I would touch but on one abuse of this parable, which is nevertheless but too possible, and in the present day by no means uncommon. I mean the inference that all strictness of religious practice, and all reasonable care of the external as the vehicle for the spiritual, is to be shunned under the name of Pharisaism; and that a life careless in all these respects, but interspersed occasionally with earnest applications to God for mercy, is the right path of the publican that we should follow. One single consideration is sufficient to refute this most pernicious inference. It is that such humbling and heartfelt confession as the publican's cannot possibly subsist in any, without an earnest and a constant care to keep God's commandments. I speak here of *habitual* confession; not of that which may occur once in some lives, on the turning point of penitence from a course of contented sin; nor of what may possibly for a while follow this,—when the strong man armed that had so long kept his goods in peace, is disturbed by the stronger arm of the Son of man that would eject him. Possibly the co-existence of earnest confession of sin at one time, and the willing practice of it at another, may continue for

a while. But this will not subsist long: either will the confession, through the grace of the Saviour God whom it invokes, prevail to overcome the cherished practice of sin,—or the sin will prevail to banish the utterly unmeaning and infructuous confession. Then only will the confession continue, when, the dominion of sin being renounced, and a race of holy obedience truly pursued,—each step in that obedience will reveal to us more fully the height that we have not reached, and the sinful imperfection that still cleaves to us. And as our obliquities and wrongnesses will be perceived in proportion as they are renounced,—as they are more than we can by possibility know, or can perhaps in charity suspect, to exist in other men,—the most careful strictness of practice will thus consist with the utmost absence of Pharisaism. We shall adopt without hypocrisy, or the consciousness of exaggeration, the humiliating language respecting ourselves which the Church daily puts in our mouths; and in the union of humility with exact obedience, will find the best earnest of our perseverance, and consequent salvation.

SERMON V.

THE TWO SEPULCHRES AT BETHEL.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 13, 1840.¹)

2 KINGS XXIII. 17, 18.

Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things which thou hast done against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came from Samaria.

THE proposer of this question, which occurs in one of the lessons of this day, was the exemplary king Josiah, while engaged in the pious work of destroying the altar of Bethel, with every vestige of the idolatry long since established there by the founder of the rival kingdom of Israel. The answer points to an event of that period, remote, even then, in time, yet fresh in the traditional recollection of all, as we may discern in the immediate recognition of the circumstance by the king of Judah. The history of the man of God that came from Judah, and of the Samaritan prophet buried beside him, is indeed a very memorable one: and as this recurrence to it, from a view of the sepulchral monuments of the parties, three hundred and fifty years after, is exceedingly

¹ First preached in India, Sept. 5, 1830.

well adapted to fix its true character on our minds,—let this question and reply, in our evening lesson this day, be made the text of our meditation on a history, which was read in the services of the Church five Sundays since¹, and which is written, like everything else in the ancient Scripture, for our learning.

The mission of this man of God was to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, at Bethel: but his message of judgment was not the first which that wayward prince had received from the Almighty. His great sin, as it was not without denunciation of vengeance following, was not also without Divine warning preceding; nor is there anything more remarkable, in the history of this general apostasy of the ten tribes, than the care taken by the God of Israel to prevent its necessity, even after the separation of those tribes from their brethren of Judah and Benjamin. He immediately, by the mouth of a prophet, forbade all wars between these two portions of his inheritance: the sin of their separation He did not lay to the charge of the leaders of Ephraim, but rather of David's successors, Solomon and Rehoboam, whose grievous oppressions had provoked it. He said to the house of Judah, "Fight not against your brethren; for this thing is of me;" and to the other party, even to Jeroboam himself, he declared, even before the event, the conditions on which his new sovereignty might be the means of benefit to himself and to his people. "Behold," are

¹ Eighth Sunday after Trinity, Morning Lesson.

God's words to him, while the son of David was yet reigning,—“Behold, I rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and give ten tribes to thee; and to his son will I give one tribe, that my servant David may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. And if thou wilt hearken to all that I command thee, to keep my statutes and commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with thee, and give thee a sure house, as I gave to David: and will give Israel to thee; and I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.” Had, then, the new sovereign regarded in this the clear voice of the God of his fathers; had he respected the house of God at Jerusalem as he might have done, and remembered the religious promise made to David and his line, from whom the Christ should come hereafter; there was nothing, even in this unhappy separation, which should have made his condition, or that of any other in the ten northern tribes, the condition of an apostate from the God of Israel, and an outcast from the promise and hope of the fathers.

But instead of taking this wise and pious course, Jeroboam, as we well know, acted the part which all mere politicians, or worldly men, would act under the same circumstances; the part in which he stands as the representative of schismatical and sacrilegious sovereigns. He feared that the common worship at Jerusalem would lead his people to their old allegiance to David's house, whose seat of empire was still fixed there; per-

haps, also, presumptuously concluding, that as the ark of God once had its abode within the territory of Ephraim, from the days of Joshua downward, before the iniquity of Eli's house caused the Lord to reject His ancient habitation at Shiloh, therefore he might, of his own authority, re-establish the presidency of Joseph, and reject that sacred mount of Sion, on which, by the mouth of David his servant, God had declared His seat fixed for ever. However this may be, Jeroboam said in his heart, "If this people go up to sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even to Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to the house of David." He took counsel, it is said, on this politic suggestion: and the result was, that he established at Bethel and at Dan, places to which he instructed the people to resort, instead of Jerusalem: and as they would require a sensible sign to stand to them instead of the glory above the cherubims and the mercy-seat, he set up the idolatrous ensign of the calves for that purpose. And then perceiving that the Levites and Aaronic priesthood, dispersed among these nine tribes as well as the two others, would not come into this unauthorized and apostate worship, he took upon himself to institute another priesthood, at the least expense possible to his treasury, composed of persons more likely to aid the views of the court. He made priests, it is said, of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi; he caused festivals and sacrifices to be

celebrated by them and by himself also, on the more solemn occasions, on this newly-instituted altar of Bethel, in imitation of those which were performed according to Divine prescript at Jerusalem. This was the sin whereby he made Israel to sin; and in which none of the succeeding monarchs of that kingdom, however disposed, like Jehu and others, to abolish the foreign idolatries of Baal, had the piety or the courage to desist from following him.

To this prince therefore, after the deliberate commission of his flagrant sin, God sent the Jewish prophet of my text, charged with the announcement at Bethel itself, the chief seat of the apostate worship, of that destruction of its priests, and pollution of its altars, which a future son of David, Josiah by name, should execute. The boldness of the message astonishes the impious king in the centre of his power and novel worship; but the arm he stretches forth to arrest the intruder is withered; and it is restored whole as before as soon as he implores for that purpose the intercession of the stranger; before whom also his own altar is rent, and its ashes poured out on the ground. In vain, however, does he offer to the man of God any recompense, or any entertainment befitting one entrusted with powers such as these: the prophet pleads the command he had received from God, that he should eat no bread and drink no water till he had left the apostate territories, and returned to Judæa; a command so absolute and peremptory, that he declares not even an offer of

half Jeroboam's house should tempt him to its violation.

Such was the commission of this man of God : and such, as you have heard, his faithful discharge of it. And how came then his bones to lie in this idolatrous place itself, where Josiah, the object of his prophecy, found them more than three centuries after, as you have heard in my text? The cause of it is found in the equally strange and melancholy sequel of his history, as contained in the first book of Kings. The prophet had been disobedient to the voice of his Lord : he had not indeed suffered himself to be dazzled by the splendour of Jeroboam's court, or the offers of welcome at his palace, dictated probably at the time by real reverence and gratitude : but that to which the power of the impious king was unequal, was unhappily effected by the craft of another prophet. "There dwelt," it is said, "an old prophet at Bethel : " he is the man whose bones are mentioned in the text as lying by those of the man of God in that place ; and this man, an ancient resident, a witness, and probable participator of the wrong and wicked proceedings there established, is led, by motives which it is not very difficult to conceive, to practise a singular deceit upon that man of God, whose deed of wonder his own two sons had witnessed. He is anxious to know more than his sons could tell him, respecting one that had denounced so signal and extraordinary a judgment upon a place where himself had sojourned, and where he had lent to these denounced prac-

tices the passive, if not the active, sanction of his name, as a prophet of the most high God. Such consciousness would make him willing, if possible, to find precedents for his conduct in all other prophets: and when he found so marked an exception as this, he would be interested to discover how far the stern integrity of the man of God, that had withstood Jeroboam's offers, would be proof against every other solicitation. Speculations of this kind, common in the case of presumptuous sinners who have not yet hardened themselves against every misgiving of conscience, are full of evil in themselves, and they are fruitful in the production of more: they lead men, unconsciously perhaps at first, to take measures for producing the result they would wish, and thus make them tempters of the people of God,—the character of all others most nearly approaching the diabolical, that which delights to extend the circle of its own mischief and apostasy. Thus it was with the old prophet of Samaria: he overtakes the man of Judah on his way towards Jerusalem, about to lay before the LORD in His temple the declaration of his mission faithfully accomplished; an honour and happiness cheaply purchased by the rigours of a lengthened fast, while hastening from the land of the reprov'd Ephraimites. But that honour and happiness was not to be his. A repose on the wayside—a repose most dangerous under his circumstances, not merely as affording occasions of temptation, but, like the sleep of the disciples at Gethsemane, re-

laxing the firm and holy tone of mind that could alone resist temptation,—this repose gives the opportunity to his brother prophet of accosting and inviting him. His scruple, arising from the command of his God, is then met by the other's assuring him, with infamous falsehood, that he too had received from the same God an order to invite and to make him welcome at his house. On this message, delivered to him by a man whom he had never before seen, and in contradiction of one addressed immediately to himself, the weary and hungry man of God allows himself to be persuaded; and there, in the house of his deceiver, is that deceiver's own mouth opened to declare the penalty of his disobedience, which is, that he shall never return to his land, nor lie in the sepulchre of his fathers. And this is accomplished: a terrible death by a beast of the desert overtakes him on his way homeward from the scene of his seduction; and thus he is found by the old prophet, who, smitten, as it should appear, with compunction for his own heinous wrong, now laments him with tears, and proceeds to pay the last honours to his memory. Nor is this all. He solemnly charges his sons to lay his own bones, when dead, beside those of the unfortunate man of God, awaiting the time when the prediction delivered by him at the altar of Bethel should be most assuredly accomplished. And this is what we find in the events of the lesson of this day. There Josiah, the pious king, finds the sepulchre and the memorials of the ill-fated man of God: there he orders his bones to

be treated with reverence, and separated with care from the bones of the idolaters around that were burned; a place being also vouchsafed with them to the bones of the Samaritan prophet who had bewailed and buried him, who had continued and confirmed his denunciation against Bethel, and desired, in perpetual testimony of it, that this monumental title should be erected, and his own remains interred there also.

The story is, as all must confess, a most remarkable one; and, like many others in sacred history, not without its difficulty. On hearing these circumstances of aggravated deceit, accompanied with even blasphemous falsehood, in one party, and what should appear on the most rigid view but too easy credulity on the other, the question can scarcely fail to be asked; Why is this prophet of Judah visited with such signally severe judgment, while his tempter, the only really guilty person as some would say, the prophet of Samaria, appears to have escaped with impunity?

A further reflection, however, on the whole circumstances, may materially correct our views of this matter. In every case of express Divine revelation or commission, the great responsibility rests on him who has received it; and this fact, of which the analogy of human affairs may abundantly convince us all, is never to be lost sight of when considering the conduct and the fates of these two prophets. The prophet of Samaria, who had sinned with thousands of his countrymen under the constraint of irreligious power,—who had quenched his occa-

sional convictions, probably, by throwing his guilt on the man that made Israel to sin, (a plea indeed far less good in his case as a prophet, than in that of an ordinary Israelite,)—and in whom the uneasy consciousness of guilt unrepented had produced its usual cankering fruits of insincerity and hostility to consistent goodness,—this man is permitted, by the inscrutable counsel of the Most High, to carry out a villanous enterprise, which brings no return of either profit or pleasure to himself; but is, on the contrary, the means of bringing home to him the terrible truth which the prophet, the victim of his deceit, had denounced against himself and his fellow-apostates. His mind is now turned by this awful truth to penitence and compunction: he becomes a zealous supporter of the truth which the man of God asserted among his own people, and in real earnest a mourner for him. Now whether his repentance were accepted or not, we are not told: we only infer that it was from seeing that his remains were respected at last by the chosen instrument of God's judgment, and associated with those of his more honoured victim. But supposing him certainly accepted as a sincere penitent, we must not suppose that he was without punishment, because no explicit punishment is recorded. It is probable, even from what we read of his sentiments toward the man he had betrayed, that he suffered in mind, if not otherwise, far more than the Divine Spirit has thought it requisite to record for example concerning him.

Such then is the case of the prophet of Samaria: but such silence respecting the award of Divine judgment did not suit the case of the prophet of Judah. *He* was entrusted with a commission of most extraordinary weight and moment, that of convicting of sin the far greater portion of God's people Israel: and in one essential point of the means directed to secure that purpose he proved unfaithful to his commission; not indeed through any malice or deliberate ill purpose, but through an act of folly merely, the folly of accepting as a certain message from God one so represented to him, under circumstances which disposed him to an indolent carnal compliance. But this folly is one which, on the most attentive possible survey, will appear to be utterly without excuse; such as no earthly sovereign or master could tolerate in any commissioned and directed servant. It is visited accordingly with a judgment that is signal and conspicuous: a judgment made absolutely necessary to preclude the scandal arising from the prophet's violation of his orders, among the people whom his stern fidelity was needed to convict and alarm,—the people before whom he had so publicly declared at Bethel the command of the Almighty, that he should eat no bread and drink no water in that territory. As the event actually proved, the bones of the man of God carried to Bethel itself, and accompanied with the testimony, even after death, of the prophet of their own who had tempted him aside, must have been a stronger proof to the people of the reality and authority of

his commission,—a more powerful means of warning to the whole ten tribes, and of maintaining the number of those among them who, with the seven thousand in Ahab's day, were faithful to the Lord God of Israel,—than would have been probably effected by the absolute faithfulness of the man of God, and his return to the land of Judah, to be buried there with his fathers. But this good consequence was un contemplated by himself; it was the effect of Divine wisdom overruling the issues of his own foolish transgression; and it was brought about solely by his punishment.

Let not then the evil suggestion find admission into our hearts, to which the slothful servant in the parable gave utterance, that in this God manifests himself as an austere taskmaster, visiting with inexorable severity the least failing of His otherwise faithful and attentive servants. It is true that God has been careful to mark in this instance, as in others, that His word is the highest sanction, paramount to every other which can be imposed on man; and that deliberately to prefer to this an inferior authority, even when claiming, as the present, to come indirectly from the same source, is no less than relaxing the sole bond of all religious obligation; it is acting like the first pair, in preferring the indirect reasonings of the serpent to the unquestioned and unrepealed orders of the supreme Lord. But as the guilt in this instance did not consist, like that of Eve, in listening to suggestions against God's goodness, but in the too ready acceptance of a pretended message from

Him, the falsity of which would have been at once detected by a more vigilant obedience,—and as the repentance was probably sincere and bitter for this indolent folly, in the short interval between hearing the old prophet's denunciation and experiencing its fulfilment,—so have we no indication in this history, that the punishment of the man of God, as he is always termed, extended to final reprobation; though he was denied that which in the ancient dispensation was one appointed symbol of acceptance, a burial in the sepulchre of his fathers. The honour which his memory receives under circumstances which bespeak the immediate interposition of God himself,—the lion, the instrument of Divine vengeance, watching over the untorn body, and defending it against all other molestation until those charged with his obsequies appeared,—the standing testimony which his remains bore to the truth of his message,—and above all, the high respect paid to them by that faithful and divinely directed son of David, who accomplished his prediction against the idolatries of Bethel,—all these circumstances induce the belief, that this prophet, whose grave was with the wicked, was yet gathered in peace to the rest of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that his general obedience was accepted through the Divine mercy to the final blessing which Christ should open, though his one failure in that obedience—a failure of which he had time for deep repentance—earned such a terrible earthly punishment. The bones of the man of God shall awake, we may hope, from their sleep in the dust of the earth, as the

prophet Daniel declares, to share the honours of those who were in their days witnesses, however feeble, to the cause of truth and righteousness: and the most severe punishment attending his stumbling in that cause,—more severe than the sudden catastrophe of his death, and the shortening of his period in this life of misery and uncertainty,—may be the stain that blots his memory; which exhibits him to all ages as a beacon of warning instead of an example for imitation. The example may lead each of us to exclaim with the old prophet, Alas! my brother!—to read in his fate what is surely in its measure our own, when we suffer the love of ease, or self-indulgences in themselves harmless, or too ready compliances with others, to eat out the heart of our virtuous resolutions, and neglect in any way the strict path of duty that God enjoins on us.

It is not on this instance alone that we rest the truth of the remark—that the errors of those who are entrusted with important services by the Almighty are visited by Him with more exemplary severity than the errors of ordinary men; as they are far more dangerous to others on account of the service or the character they tarnish. Who is more honoured in the ancient dispensation than Moses the man of God, the deliverer and lawgiver of his people, the Prophet to whom none was like in respect of intimate communion and converse with the Almighty, until that greater Prophet, the Incarnate Word, who alone was to supersede him? Doubtless it is to that very circumstance that we are

to ascribe the fact, that an error, arising as it should appear from momentary want of faith, from inadvertency, or accidental impatience, causing him to neglect to give God his due honour before the congregation of Israel, was noticed with much greater severity than the same fault could have been in one less distinguished. It was visited with no less penalty than exclusion from the land of Canaan,—that great end and object of his earthly pilgrimage—that goal, to which, from the first Exodus from Egypt throughout all the wearisome march across the waste and dreary wilderness, he never ceased, with admirable conduct and unimpaired meekness, to direct the attention of his wayward people.

We might extend this observation to the case of Aaron also, the great head of the ancient typical priesthood of Israel; whose trespass in that instance with his brother, as well as his far more flagrant offence before in yielding to the people in the matter of an idolatrous revelry, was visited, on account of his high sacerdotal dignity, with an earlier death in the wilderness, and a more complete exclusion from the sight of that promised land in which his descendants were to minister before God. But in one of those descendants we may perceive a yet nearer parallel to the case of the man of God in my text. The sin of Eli, like the first trespass of Aaron, proceeded apparently from the same source as his; a culpable easiness of disposition, which made him regard man more than God, where the just care of God's household re-

quired a vigilant and effective coercion. Yet, venerable as was this man by the piety of his character, as well as by the sanctity of his office,—as his meek submission to the Divine sentence affectingly proves,—how exceedingly severe and dreadful was that sentence pronounced on him and his posterity for ever! The reason is that Eli was entrusted by God with duties of no common description: he united in himself the characters of a high priest and a judge in Israel: and therefore neglect of religious strictness towards his offspring, which in a private man might only have been visited with the ordinary consequences of that great error, or be passed over as a common blemish in an otherwise good character, was, in his station of eminent commission and responsibility, attended with conspicuous and awful punishment.

The application of this to all persons, and all situations, is sufficiently obvious. “To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” And as the offences of a Gentile who sins, as St Paul says, without law, are not so heinous as the selfsame offences in one who is in alliance with God, more especially in one who has received the seal of regeneration, and has been planted into his Saviour’s death and resurrection,—so even among Christians, the common devotion to Christ by baptism conveys not the same degree of obligation with that apostolical commission, which descending in direct

line from Him, causes the promise to the chosen twelve to be ours also; "Whosoever receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." The difference may be estimated even from the opinions of men; who will censure with severity in one who bears Christ's express commission what they would overlook or regard with complacency in other men. And instead of directing our attention to the ill-will, or the positive injustice, with which the censure is not unfrequently accompanied, and the forgetfulness it often implies of the sanctity that is required of *all* Christians indispensably,—it were well to reflect on the higher judgment of God which these human judgments do indeed in part reflect and represent to us, and the measure of fidelity He expects from men, in proportion as they have been called to his special service.

But there is one point in which this example of the prophet of Judah applies to the whole body of Christians without exception; for there is a message of God with which every member of the household of faith is charged, and for his attention to which he is individually and personally accountable. The great truths of Christian religion are enforced on every baptized member of Christ's household as the rule to which his life must be conformed; and that message is described as a final one: the volume of revelation, in which all its great truths are contained, is finally sealed; and the Church Catholic, which is their appointed guardian and dispenser, is to sub-

sist even to the end of the world. Every voice therefore, whatever it be, which would make exceptions to the obligation that the truth imposes on any Christian, whether on the plea of ease or expediency, or supposed greater light obtained in the present later age of the world than what was possessed by our believing forefathers,—every such voice comes to us like that of the seducing prophet to the credulous man of Judah: it must be silenced, if we regard our salvation, by pleading the perpetual obligation imposed upon us, from that word that is unrepealed and unalterable: for, as an inspired Apostle has said, and emphatically repeated: “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed¹.” Bearing this awful sentence in mind, most careful should we be that we make no league with any seducing spirit; that we take the word of God for our sole rule of life; and beware of reckoning on any impunity for wilful neglects, on the score of supposed sincerity or general regard to God’s will, since it is precisely this which makes any wilful deflexion more inexcusable, and more liable to signal punishment. Let us remember also that it is the tendency of every such deflexion, when unrepented, to lead to final apostasy: and, as the wise son of Sirach remarks in the book of Ecclesiasticus: “He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.” To that grace which is alone able to keep us from falling; and finally, to present

¹ Gal. i. 8, 9.

us spotless before God, should be our hope and recourse against such seductions. Thus watching always, as Christ directs, against evil, may we hope, even in the midst of conscious weakness, to be conducted to that world, where there will be no longer any path of folly, or any danger of falling.

SERMON VI.

THE FAITHFUL CENTURION.

(Preached at St Mary's, Jan. 31, 1841.¹)

MATTHEW VIII. 10, 11, 12.

Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness.

EXPRESSIONS of admiration are not frequent in the discourses of Jesus Christ. He who knew whatsoever was in man, and whose charity towards us was as infinite as his knowledge, was more often led by the circumstances of things that surrounded Him to the language, even of severe denunciation, than of applause or extraordinary praise. But in the instances, and they are not very few, in which his approval or commendation is recorded, its object is always *faith*; not the accidents of external condition, nor the less separable attributes of intellectual eminence or power, which draw forth the warmest and loudest plaudits from man,—but *faith*. That quality of mind which realizes to

¹ This Sermon was written many years before in India.

itself an inspection greater and higher than its own, or that of any mortal man,—and which when the Eternal Truth was incarnate in His person, attached itself, as it were, instinctively to Him, and trusted Him,—this is the quality which He ever notices with approbation, and rewards with the free disposal of every boon which it either asks or desires.

The signal and eminent praise bestowed on the Roman centurion of this day's Gospel, demands however an especial notice; both as illustrating in a most powerful manner the virtue of divine faith, and as pointing out from that example, as my text suggests, the great change in the divine dispensation which the Advent of the Son of God had already introduced, and which would soon be generally manifested throughout the world. The state of things in which divine privileges were attached to one peculiar nation, in which all favoured Gentiles were exceptions, and only admitted as such by being engrafted, like Rahab and Ruth of old, on the chosen stock of Abraham,—this was not at once or suddenly altered. Even when the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world had risen in its glorious Epiphany upon the world, and Gentile sages were summoned from afar to worship at the same lowly shrine with the Jewish shepherds, it was only after special information from the priests and doctors of the law at Jerusalem, that their star conducted them to Bethlehem: the Samaritan stranger was some time after told that salvation was of the Jews:

the Syro-phoenician stranger was even harshly reminded, that the Saviour's first care was for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The example of the centurion now before us has some pregnant intimations of the same kind; indicating a period at hand, but yet not fully arrived, when the middle wall of partition should be broken down, and the message of divine mercy should proceed from Jewish teachers—even from Hebrews of the Hebrews, as in his case whose wonderful conversion we so lately celebrated—to gather in one all the tribes and families of the earth.

Let us view, in the first place, the conduct and character of the man whose faith is commended by Christ in the text as greater than all He had found in Israel,—who is a precursor and a model of the multitudes who were to be admitted to His fold from the most remote Gentiles: and then let us, secondly, consider how this example affects ourselves, who have been fully admitted to share with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the character of children of the kingdom,—to inherit privileges and hopes which our neglect may forfeit and destroy.

Our first concern is to view what is recorded to us in the gospels of the history and deportment of this good soldier. What we have heard read from St Matthew's gospel might lead us to imagine that he addressed Christ in his own person for his servant: but the more circumstantial narrative of St Luke informs us that the application was made by him through the intervention of certain

elders of the Jews; the master presuming not to come, as he afterwards assured our Lord, nor thinking himself worthy to prefer the request for himself. And this circumstance, while it further displays the retiring modesty and humility of mind which we see in the concluding turn of his intercourse with our Lord, gives occasion also for bringing out another point of his history, on which our present immediate gospel is silent. The Jewish elders whom he employed as intercessors were even zealously importunate with our Lord on his behalf: saying, that though a Gentile, he was well worthy of having such signal attention shewn him: "for he loveth our nation," they observe, "and hath built us a synagogue." And since from the immediate promise of our Lord to come and heal the servant, we are led to view this as the first recommendation of the centurion to Christ, procuring for him, as already in some respect of Abraham's household, an immediate attention not vouchsafed to other Gentile applicants in the gospels, we may well commence our observation with this particular, and mark how the same spirit of faith that dictated the substance and mode of his special supplication to Christ, was visible in this remarkable feature of his previous conduct. To do so, is certainly not disparaging to the direct faith in the Saviour, but the contrary: for it is His own voice that has assured us, that while "every one that doeth evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his deeds should be re-proved; he that doeth truth cometh to the Light,

that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

In what manner the Romans usually regarded the Jewish people subjected to their rule, we are left in no doubt from the abundant monuments of the time. It was not long before this event that the greatest orator of their nation had termed the Jews the most contemptible of all mankind; and it was not very long after that their gravest historian denounced the Jewish religion as bearing the most odious and malevolent aspect to all the rest of the world. And in the face of such examples, only evincing the ordinary sentiments of these haughty conquerors towards a people and a ritual they so little comprehended,—had this act of the centurion, "that he loved their nation, and had built them a synagogue," stood quite alone in his history in the gospel, apart from every other circumstance, we might have very probably conceived it as the act of a kindhearted and liberal person, wishing to oblige the people among whom he dwelt, but utterly unaccompanied with any peculiar reverence or respect for their religion. Amidst our own countrymen, whom Providence has placed in an exactly similar position as conquering rulers, but in a *heathen* land, there are many who will patronize with ill-timed munificence superstitions which they in their own hearts despise, but which they know to be dear to the people by whom they are surrounded, and whom a higher charity would be concerned rather to reclaim, as far as might be, from an influence so

baneful. And the act of the centurion, taken by itself, might have seemed like the acts of those Englishmen in India, the offspring of a generously disposed mind in human concerns, but rather evincing indifference than regard to religion; it might indicate an easy persuasion that the worship of Jehovah by Jews, of Jupiter and the other gods by the Romans, were all alike at bottom, and might be equally patronized in the respective votaries. But what we read further of the centurion forbids altogether this otherwise natural interpretation of his conduct. Not only the good report of the elders, which might be suspected as interested, but the humble sense entertained by himself of his own position compared with theirs,—his devout recognition of the Great Prophet and healer of Israel, whom he thought himself not privileged to approach like them,—all this evinces a disposition towards their religion most opposite to that of his contemptuous countrymen, and proves that in supporting it, he was supporting not what ancient and modern infidelity would call the worship of the tutelar God of the Hebrews merely, but that of the recognized Lord of himself and of all the earth. He had doubtless seen in that religion which his countrymen ignorantly decried as an unsocial and gloomy superstition, something infinitely superior to that gross and puerile and self-contradictory system which was established in his own otherwise far superior nation. And whatever might be his knowledge of the sacred documents and peculiar tenets of

that divine religion,—whether it were such or not as to entitle him to be termed, in the Rabbinical language, a *proselyte of the gate*,—his faith was evinced by that which is its only living and true manifestation, that of works: he came forward as a munificent friend and supporter of that despised worship; he loved this hated nation of the Jews, and built them a synagogue at his own charge.

The strength of righteous and self-denying principle involved in this, may be conceived by imagining the impression which such an act, built on avowed approbation of the Jews and their religion, must have produced on his own fellow-countrymen in Palestine. Doubtless they must have thought, and some must have intelligibly expressed the sentiment, that this was an eccentric and perverse course of conduct: that such attention to a barbarous religion (as they would word it) little suited his profession or circumstances; that though it might be right and liberal to allow each system of faith to be the best adapted to those who professed it, yet for him thus to take up the worship of an inconsiderable and sordid nation, was both to disgrace himself, and condemn his own noble country and people. Many are the shapes into which these worldly arguments might be thrown, and urged with a force which none could resist, except he were an earnest lover of the truth, and determined, when he had seen, to act according to it. But after the best conviction of the truth of the religion of Moses, how many still might be the pleas against any

sacrifice in support of it as it then existed! How many were the scandals which then beset the sanctuary,—from the opposed sects which alleged each the Law and the Prophets, while they proscribed and hated each other,—from the evident worthlessness and unprincipled covetousness of those who then most courted applause for their sanctity, or challenged respect for the spiritual authority of their station,—scandals in which an irresolute half-hearted purpose would have lost itself, while a profane or libertine spirit would even take delight in the survey of them. It was no common integrity of mind and purpose which, amidst so much to distract it both on the side of the Romans and of the Jews, could have clung to the truth, obvious and unavoidable as it is to the simple and sincere;—the truth that no scandal however grievous, arising from schisms or perverted religion, could affect in the least the wisdom of their choice, who in singleness of heart followed the steps of their pious forefathers; who in the temple where God had fixed His name and habitation, and in the synagogues where the knowledge of His word and will was perpetuated, adhered to the clear tradition of Moses and the Prophets.

The conduct of the centurion when the Sun of Righteousness appeared on the earth, making manifest by His presence the thoughts and the counsels of men, is the best proof that the view thus taken of his previous conduct is no imaginary one; that his patronage of Jewish worship was no fruit of a capricious or merely kind disposition, but of that

higher virtue which comes from God, and points to God. To what extent he was instructed as to the character and offices of the Messiah, does not appear, nor whether he referred to these, if known, what he heard concerning Jesus of Nazareth; but the honest disposition of heart, which, far more than accuracy of knowledge, produced faith in His name and power, is in the centurion most conspicuous. It was no terror or extreme necessity, such as oft awakes religious impressions in those who were before total strangers to them, that directed him to invoke the Divine power which was so specially exerted, above all other places, in the town of Capernaum where he was quartered: it was not for himself, but for a sick servant, that he claimed that power: and while this circumstance further exemplifies the disinterested humanity which in him so strongly marked the mind that is right in the sight of God, this example of it comes opportunely to shew that he was not one of those who, in liberality to strangers and foreigners, utterly overlook their immediate obligations, and the concerns of their own household. And though our Lord's assent to the elders' solicitation is immediate, "I will come and heal him;"—this compliance with his wishes only awakens instead of removing, in this singularly humble man, his sense of unworthiness of so high a favour. Yet his diffidence of himself is unaccompanied with the least distrust of the heavenly Benefactor: he asks, on this account, of Christ, while He is in the act of approaching the house

to heal the servant, a yet higher display of power than he had before desired;—one which would not cost Him more, while it would spare the unseemly necessity of drawing the great Deliverer aside to visit one so little worthy of the honour. He begs Him by his single word at a distance to effect the cure. For himself, he observes, though a man of no extraordinary powers, and acting under the authority of superior officers, could deal thus absolutely with those who were legitimately under his command: his mere word could in any case supply the place of personal presence and inspection: he could be secure, though absent, of the soldier or the servant punctually executing his direction. Could not He therefore, who had proved his authority over disease and death itself—could not He even thus command the disease to depart, if He would? Such is the request with which, in St Luke's account, he meets our Lord by the mouth of other friends, as He was accompanying the elders towards the house: and the humble motive that prompts the request, the confidence in Christ's power that animates it, and the simple but most satisfactory argument by which he justifies that confidence, engage in a peculiar manner the attention of the Saviour of mankind. Of the many who had applied to Him on behalf of others, none had expressed that confidence in his ability to effect the cure at a distance; though all had the same reason, some even stronger, for drawing the same conclusion. The Galilean courtier, of the same city of Capernaum, whom St John mentions as taking

a long day's journey to Cana to supplicate for his sick son, thinks only of bringing our Saviour to the spot; and far from imagining that Christ could possibly effect the cure otherwise, impatiently interrupts his admonitory remark by the sentence, "Sir, come down ere my child die." Neither does Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue in the same place, when addressing Christ for his daughter, think otherwise than that His presence in the chamber is requisite. And the gracious Lord who answered Jairus according to his faith, by restoring his child to life at his house,—and who answered the Jewish nobleman far beyond it, by healing his son at a distance,—is not wanting to confer the same favour on the man whose faith thus directly implored the more extraordinary benefit. But He defers for an instant the expression of this assent, to point out this instance of genuine faith, with all its moral accompaniments, to the admiration, and at the same time to the warning, of His Jewish followers. He assures them, that a faith like that which this heathen stranger had manifested, had never been witnessed by Him among the multitudes of those of His own nation, whom He came especially to seek and to save; but He adds, that this superiority, strange as it was, was a prelude of something else more striking and awful; that many of the Gentile world should even then from the most distant quarters of the world press with earnest faith and obedience into the kingdom of God, and be admitted as its legitimate members, on the foundation of the patriarchs and pro-

phets; while of those whose hereditary descent from those patriarchs pointed them out as specially children of the kingdom, the great mass should be excluded. They should be transferred to the exterior darkness; to the regions where there is no light or hope; where is wailing and gnashing of teeth; fruitless bitter remorse for privileges lost, and blessings once freely offered to their grasp, but wantonly and wickedly thrown away.

An example thus emphatically commended by our Lord cannot be without its eminent application to all who are members of His mystical body on the earth: who are all equally, with the first Gentile converts whom St Paul addressed, admitted to the fellowship of the apostles and prophets, who are children of the kingdom by virtue of their baptism and engrafting into Christ, and are themselves, even as Isaac was, heirs according to the promise. If all things written in the ancient Scripture were written for our learning, *i.e.* for the instruction and edification of those to whom this regeneration and adoption is vouchsafed by Christ, much more must this be true of the record of his sojourn upon earth; where every instance of his beneficent power is not an external proof only, but an expressive image and symbol of the grace which He exerts for the recovery of mankind. As the bread which He distributed among the hungry multitudes was a symbol of the living bread which He gave for the life of the world, even thus are his cures of bodily infirmity and disease the

symbols of that removal of the impotences of error and vice which his grace only can impart to the distempered soul. The language which the Church in her Litany and offices continually addresses to her Lord on high, is the same by which the diseased and the blind invoked his attention on earth; "Son of David, have mercy upon us:" and every instance of faith reposed in Him for these inferior blessings then, is an earnest for our trust in Him for higher mercies now,—the mercies which, from the right hand and from the glory of the Father, He dispenses by large measures to his mystical body below.

Let then the example of the centurion be thus viewed by all who recognize the needs of their spiritual and immortal being, and with all the additional strength which the contrast of his condition in Israel with our own confers on his extraordinary example. His condition in the land of promise was that of a stranger; and inasmuch as the character of the soldier of a conquering nation implies hostility, a stranger of no welcome description; one who, to judge by the letter of the law, as well as by the interpretations then generally prevalent, should appear to have little to hope from the prophetic teachers of the favoured nation, and least of all from the Christ, the Anointed Son of David, who should renew the glories of his ancestor, who was to deliver Israel from all invaders, and reinstate them in independence and prosperity. Yet we see how his mind conducts him right on these points, which

formed a stumblingblock to thousands more favourably situated than himself; and how, with a full consciousness of his position, and what many would regard as a too retiring diffidence resulting from it, he unites a belief in Christ's power and goodness greater than that of any Jewish suppliant. The Gentile captain of older time, whom distress led to the prophet of Israel, is both indignant that Elisha comes not forth to him in person, and distrustful of the simple means of cure he prescribes through his messenger: but the Roman, unlike his Syrian predecessor, deprecates, instead of desiring, the personal appearance of the great Prophet on his behalf, while the trust he reposes in the divine efficacy of His direction is unlimited. Did then such confident expectation, of a grace never heard of before, become a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel? And what then is the confidence in the restoring power of Christ which becomes those whom He has incorporated to himself in baptism, whom He has embraced with the arms of his mercy, surrounded with the means of grace, and encouraged with the promise of a celestial Comforter, to supply His place with them for ever?

It is not merely as an example of the strength of faith, but of its indispensable moral characteristics, that the example of the centurion is useful to every age of the Church. There are popular statements respecting faith which would represent every degree of diffidence as in some sort naturally opposed to it: many there are who think its proper

place then only secured, when it is taken abstractedly, and contradistinguished from everything in which its vitality consists: many who, by a strange process of thought, imagine Christ to be then only truly honoured, when a naked immediateness is affected in the mode of approaching Him, and that it is a departure from the simple faith of the Gospel, when His own appointed channels of pardoning and cleansing grace are, as such, sacredly revered and cherished. To remove impressions like these, and all their unhappy fruits,—of irreverence or spiritual arrogance in the coarser spirits, of perplexity and melancholy in others,—no example can be more useful than the present one; where the faith commended by Christ our Lord as greater than all the faith in Israel, is one which bespeaks a very different tone of mind, and inculcates a very different practical lesson. For though we have not to employ, like him, elders of the Jews in our approach to Christ,—God in his unspeakable mercy having reserved a better portion to us,—yet the spirit that dictated his mode of approach and converse with Jesus, is in substance the same which is required to animate our own. Our true faith is also to seek Christ in the prescribed ways of approach to Him, ways far more intimate and blessed in our case, than those vouchsafed even to Israel of old: our true exaltation of Christ is to view Him, not as apart from all these, but as pervading all, as conveyed and reflected in all. It is Christ we honour, when in the laver of regeneration we view our original

guilt cancelled, and ourselves buried with Him by baptism unto death; for this is His express word and promise of remission, who shed out of his most precious side both water and blood for our redemption. It is Christ we honour, when, in the blessed sacrament of his body and blood, we view the very bread of heaven with which our souls are fed, and all the benefits of His life-giving passion and sacrifice, not only represented, but sealed, conveyed, and communicated to us; for this is his own word and promise, who has commanded us thus to feed on Him to our soul's health, and to set forth his death till He come again. And thus, to descend to less intimate means of approach, when we recognize Christ's presence in his sanctuaries, when we receive and honour Him in his commissioned ambassadors, or feed and cherish Him in the poor, his representatives,—this is not something distinct or apart from our proper faith in Christ, but its very life, and exercise, and perpetual manifestation. This is not to impair our regard to the one only Saviour, or to interfere in any true sense with the immediateness of our recourse to Him. Rather it is then that we most realize, with the centurion, the direct power of Christ in every place to which his word extends, when we trace that power in all the channels of grace which He has opened to mankind; when we trace their descent from age to age, not with captious hostility, but with reverent affection; when throughout, as the Apostle declares, we view the Church Universal as his body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all.

Let me add one remark in conclusion. The faith, greater than all the faith in Israel, which this worthy soldier exemplified, is not one which delighted in scanning itself, in analysing its own feelings and operations, but which looked beyond itself to Him who is its Author and Finisher, and which through that view was perfected in humility, charity, and obedience. Without this, all faith, however speculatively true, is dead, being alone; dead, as the Apostle James declares, simply because it is alone: God is not vitally believed in as the Author of our being, nor his Son as our Saviour, nor his Spirit as our Sanctifier, unless they are in these relations admitted to influence our heart and practice. The living faith is that consent to God's testimony which implies and which reproduces love to Him, and which working by that love as its vital principle, fructifies in all the acts and duties of the Christian life. Pray we then to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the faith, which was initially ours in baptism, may be maintained by the Spirit, hallowing all the means of approach which He has vouchsafed us, uniting us with the cloud of witnesses that has preceded us, preserving us fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. Pray we that we may be preserved from neglect, from disobedience and apathy; from the unspeakable anguish of beholding at last others far less favoured than ourselves in spiritual privileges, admitted with Patriarchs and Prophets into the kingdom of heaven, while we, the legitimate children of that kingdom, are cast out.

SERMON VII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES.

(Preached at St Mary's on the First Sunday after Trinity, June 13, 1841.¹)

JOSHUA X. 40.

So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded.

SEEN by the light of that dispensation of mercy under which we live, and which reflects its character upon all that preceded and foreshadowed it, there is something painfully repulsive to many minds in a statement like this of our first morning lesson. When we read in the gospel, how he that came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, rebuked the fiery zeal of two of his chief disciples, who would urge him, in the capital punishment of some inhospitable schismatics, to imitate the conduct of Elias in one memorable conjuncture of his history; it may be difficult to prevent some portion of the censure so strongly directed against the temper of James and John in that instance, from lighting in our minds on the commissioned

¹ First preached in India, June 21, 1835.

prophet of God. The invoking of fire from heaven to consume at once the captains of fifty and their men, whom an impious king had sent to apprehend him,—or the similar act of the successor and heir of his spirit, when he cursed in the name of the Lord and consigned to death the children that mocked his character as a Divine messenger,—these and other similar instances of the ancient Scripture might seem to us even contradictory to the spirit of the gospel. The commanded exterminations of Canaan, of Amalek, and others, may lead the minds of men at the present day, though by a different road, to something of the same heresy that beset the earlier ages of Christianity; the notion that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New,—not the same with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to supersede the old law, but at the same time to perfect and fulfil it.

Now in thus starting a course of thought, which I would seek with the divine help to meet and to correct, my object is not to revive, with the mere hope of combating and confuting, the arguments which careless and profane persons, ignorant alike of God and of themselves, and only seeking for reasons to countenance their irreligious views and practice, would point against the records of our religion. Such topics—not the most proper for homiletical exhortation in general,—are not our most useful subjects of consideration even here. All, we hope and trust, who come to this sacred place, seek to be built up in the faith whose im-

press and seal they received in holy baptism; and the only objects of aggressive argument that I now contemplate, are the scruples which naturally or necessarily arise in the most pious minds at some stages of their progress,—scruples which, if merely dismissed or kept out of sight, instead of being silenced and checked by the weapons which God's Holy Spirit has committed to our keeping, may accumulate around our path in a manner seriously endangering our religious steadfastness, and our reception of that support in righteousness which every part of God's oracles is designed to impart to us. I say then, with respect to that whole course of thought which I have described, that its mistake lies not in exaggerating that of which we cannot possibly think too highly,—the essentially benevolent character of the God who is love,—but in the forgetfulness of another thing, which it no less concerns us to remember, the fearful character of that moral evil, from which it is the greatest glory of divine love to rescue us. We are prone to forget that this last dispensation of God, which is the most gracious and benign in its aspect, is also the most awful of any. The words of its Divine Author, the Incarnate Truth and Mercy, abound above all others in statements of the consequences of sin, compared with which the worst of the old dispensation are light and inconsiderable: for assuredly the fire from heaven that consumed the ancient transgressors, is as nothing compared with that fire which never shall be quenched, denounced against all who reject his yoke

of self-denial; a doom of which we have the most awful picture in the Gospel of this day; where a life of mere worldliness,—a life of which no worse is recorded than that it was wholly occupied with the enjoyments of luxurious opulence, without care of God's revelation or of the man's position with regard to others,—is described as issuing by necessary consequence in a state after death too miserable for the mind to dwell upon. Nor is it in the words only of our Lord and Saviour that we trace this awful meaning, but in the sacred mysteries of his religion through which life and salvation proceed to us: for what is the Cross of Christ, the Christian's stay and consolation, but an exhibition, more awful from the mystery in which it is involved, of the portentous character of the sin which only this sacrifice could expiate; an image, like the brazen serpent exhibited to Israel, of the malignity of the disease which it is given to cure,—a disease which must be extirpated from our inmost hearts before we are fit for the regions of light and blessedness. And as God did not reveal fully from the first the methods of his recovering mercy, but only through such intimations as the world was then capable of receiving, may not that which might most distress or offend us, in the harsh mode of God's recorded proceedings of old against sinful nations or individuals, be an image of the deeper and more awful spiritual truths on which our thoughts as Christians are peculiarly required to dwell? Thus viewed, as the Gospel instructs us to view them, these painful records of the distant past may

conduce to the great end of all religion,—the sanctification of our hearts and minds in the way of God's laws and in the works of his commandments.

In discussing at present that which is perhaps the most dreadful, as it is, with the exception of the Deluge, the most general and unsparing of all the penal inflictions recorded in the ancient Scripture—I mean the extermination of the aboriginal inhabitants from the land which had been some centuries before promised to Abraham and his descendants,—I propose to prove that this awful fact implies nothing which does not comport with what we know of God's providence and government of the world; nothing but what as Christians we are ever bound to remember as our preservative against sin; nothing, finally, which should not lead us to repose with the utmost confidence and resignation in that righteous government of God, which is the one only resting place of the anxious mind, whether for our own affairs or those of the world at large. To evince this, I would view this event successively in the two aspects which are most apt to excite ~~murmuring~~ questioning of its justice; first, the unsparing universality of the doom decreed against this people; and secondly, the choice of Joshua and the Israelites as the instruments of its infliction.

Now, for the first part, the unsparing universality of the judgment, our principal concern is with the character of the people on whom so dreadful a doom was pronounced. In the series

of remarkable exhortations delivered to the Israelites by Moses, shortly before they passed over Jordan to effect this conquest, no point is more repeatedly or earnestly inculcated than this: that it was not alone or principally to put the descendants of Abraham in possession of the land, that God ordered its previous inhabitants to be cut off, though He who foresaw all things from the beginning had made this the matter of promise to the faithful patriarch; but that it was a just judgment on the wickedness and impiety with which the aboriginal people had defiled the land: it was as much to display God's justice as to mark his favour to the ancestors of the chosen seed, and far more by way of punishment on the sin of the Canaanites, than of reward to the comparative innocence of their successors. For such are the words addressed to them by the inspired Prophet and legislator: "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go in to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations doth the LORD thy God drive them out from before thee: and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." To this we find the most earnest exhortations annexed not to admit the most distant thoughts of self-approbation or self-confidence when these unmerited blessings were theirs, lest pride and neglect of God their benefactor should cause them to sink into the same abominations that ruined their predecessors. And to this end is the severe injunction directed, not

to leave any of that evil root behind, whose example and influence might seduce them to follow in their steps, and provoke equal judgments from their gracious Sovereign and Protector.

Now with respect to the vices thus generally enlarged upon in the book of Deuteronomy, the details of some of the preceding books of Moses leave no doubt of their heinous and detestable character. To nations as to individuals, the foundation of all evil is ever placed by Scripture in the forgetting of God: it is from their "not liking to retain God in their knowledge," from their substituting "the creature for the Creator, who is blessed for ever," that St Paul, in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, traces all the enormities of the Gentile world. Through this were they abandoned to vile affections, to sins even against nature, to revolting and unnatural cruelties: for, as the debased imagination invested the powers above them with the sordid corruptions incident to unlimited potestates among mankind, it proceeded to invest those corruptions themselves with the sanctions of religion, and to bind them upon general regard, not barely by the force of depraved inclination, but by all the influences of the unseen world,—by all the aspects of gloom and terror under which the superior power appears naturally to guilty men. Thus idolatry, though by carnal minds scarcely esteemed a sin on its own account, is proved to be such, nay the greatest of all, by the hateful progeny to which it gives birth: and the annexation of this circumstance of hereditary guilt and punish-

ment to the second commandment of the Decalogue in particular, may intimate to us how even in this respect that sin of the fathers is visited upon the children, by leading them, in the inevitable process of things, to crimes odious to God and man, and provocative of immediate judgment. Now this process of evil, which in the apostle's description characterized more or less the whole heathen world before Christ's coming, appears in the case of the Canaanites to have reached an early and extreme degree of enormity. Among them, crimes too horrible to be told or so much as named among Christians, are mentioned in the third book of Moses, as abominations which they did *unto their gods*—as customs of religion, universally admitted and even prescribed to the community. Thus was the sense of right and wrong, even in matters where the law of nature and conscience is clear, perverted systematically and corrupted—and though (as in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing,) the long-suffering of God had its operation,—though He waited for four long centuries, whether the example of a truer worship and a purer practice might affect them,—yet at length their iniquity was full: the land itself was declared to be sick of its inhabitants; they were fully ripe for the vengeance denounced against such transgression, dry stubble for that fire which rages against all iniquity.

Now when God, in the course of his ordinary Providence, suffers famine or pestilence, volcano, earthquake, or inundation, to desolate or destroy a people whose sins are notorious, the justice of

the infliction is unquestioned : nor is it impaired by the consideration that in such calamities the infants, and those who are wholly or at least comparatively innocent, perish indiscriminately with the most guilty. The case is assuredly not altered, when, instead of plague or dearth, or any other natural scourge, the sword of a conquering enemy is employed by the Supreme Lord to inflict the penalty : as when hereafter to punish the descendants of these very favoured Israelites for their adoption of polluting idolatries, He employed the armies of various Gentile nations ; or when, to visit upon them their last most heinous and crowning offence in crucifying the Lord of glory at his coming, He commissioned the Roman legions to execute his vengeance,—the most striking earnest and model of the final judgment which has yet been exhibited in the world. In ordinary cases, this mode of judgment is equally open to the Lord of all to employ with the other natural agents of general destruction. And since it is of the nature of God's moral government to exhibit by punishment as well as by reward the necessity of adhering to that obedient course in which alone a reasonable creature can be safe and happy, what is there here to impeach the justice, or, what is inseparable from justice, the real goodness and mercifulness to creation at large, of visiting the iniquities of an evil nation in this mode as well as in any other ? And whether the infliction come by way of natural consequence, or of express divine appointment, it is either way the act of Divine Providence ; and the

moral effect is nearly the same. When the vices of a people, by enervating and extinguishing public spirit, with all unity and harmony of purpose, leave them a prey to fierce enemies, whom they might otherwise have kept aloof and defied,—whether, as in the case of the Jews at their last fall, these causes were aided (judicially doubtless) by the same national hopes of a conquering Messiah, which had produced the preceding crime, making them easy dupes of a delusion which led them to defy and exasperate an all-powerful and irresistible enemy,—or whether, with less expense of secondary causes, the purposes of the divine judgment proceed directly to their accomplishment by the visible and manifest hand of God, as in the conquest and destruction of the Canaanites,—the hand of the Righteous Disposer is alike to be recognized in all. To vindicate this proceeding manifestly as it respects the people of Canaan, it is sufficient that they were the impious, the impure, and cruel race, which the records of Scripture describe them to have been.

I proceed, therefore, now, to the second part, on which alone there remains any difficulty to the religious mind, after the wickedness of the nation has been once shewn; and that is, the express employment and commission of Joshua and the Israelites to be the instruments of this vengeance. When the Jews, in their turn, were punished for their sins by Nebuchadnezzar, and last of all by Titus and the Romans, these were, beyond all doubt, the providential instruments of God: but

they were unconscious instruments equally with the famine or the earthquake: neither did the justice of the sentence, as it respected the people whom they destroyed, always vindicate the instruments from cruelty in the transaction, as we find in many declarations of the prophets. And therefore it is not the fact of the whole people being cut off that creates serious difficulty in the minds of pious persons; for they know that God may in his inscrutable providence,—for reasons which we either know not at all, or know but in part in this life,—suffer even the innocent to undergo dreadful calamities, or to perish, like the blessed martyrs of old, by the hands of the ungodly and the wicked. The scruple and difficulty here felt arises solely from the commission of destruction being put into the hands of men; and the imagination so easily following this, that an apparent sanction to human ferocity is given by such direct prescriptions occurring in Holy Scripture. Now as far as there is any real, *i. e.* any *moral* difficulty in this case, is it not removed by the consideration, that God commanding this as an execution of his justice, to be thus, and thus alone performed by the Israelites, as the books of Moses and Joshua emphatically declare and reiterate, plainly supersedes the possibility of malignity or cupidity or any other vice being thus nurtured in their minds, when every outbreak of selfish purpose mingling with the work of God, was signally repressed and punished? And when this one moral difficulty is removed, what then remains but a question of

means and order, with which, with our limited views of things, we are utterly incapable of dealing—the question, why could not the Gospel have been anticipated, and the Israelites commissioned to convert, instead of destroying, the idolatrous nations whose seats they occupied? We know not certainly all the reasons that made such anticipation of Christ's dispensation impossible; but that it was so, we have the surest reasons for believing: as we may easily see enough in both testaments to shew how vain is the attempt in which many good persons are disposed, by their pre-existent theories, to engage, of equalling the spiritual condition and views of the two dispensations together. The middle wall of partition was to be broken down only through that sacrifice by which the enmity was to be slain: till that fulness of time arrived, it required rather to be fortified and kept unbroken, as the barrier of God's people against Gentile corruption: the chosen family of Abraham must be kept markedly distinct from the nations which idolatry had overspread, until that promised seed should appear in whom, and in whom alone, all the families of the earth were blessed.

By these lights therefore, which the New Dispensation furnishes, may we view the records of God's ancient people, their Exodus from Egypt, their settlement in Canaan. And then, though we cannot grasp the whole of the Divine proceeding, nor, therefore, rationally expect beforehand to be able to solve every apparent difficulty that

may occur, yet may we see enough to induce the firm persuasion, that were the whole plan of Divine Wisdom embraced by us, of which sufficient glimpses are given to direct our own path, all such difficulties would vanish. How moral evil originated, and why it is suffered to exist in the world, is the one great difficulty: but taking its existence as we behold it, and as it existed in a far more uncontrolled manner before Christ came, the order of the Divine economy may be in some good measure manifest to us. To declare the power of the One True God whom Israel worshipped, over all the tutelary deities whom a vicious and corrupting idolatry had set up, no proof could be more striking than that He should give victory over all; that so long as the people were faithful to God and his covenant, their strength was the strength of the LORD of hosts, which chariots and horses and armies were in vain collected to oppose. And, while God's enemies were to be vanquished simply,—for their conversion was reserved to the day of the Prince of Peace to come,—the necessity was also most apparent for not suffering any idolater to share with His people the territory in which was to be fixed the habitation of his sacred Name, with the perpetuation of his covenant and promises. The propensity of the human mind to this fatal evil, which manifested itself so strongly even amidst all the restrictive power of the Mosaic ordinances, would have broken forth universally and irresistibly but for this rigorous exclu-

sion at their first settlement in Palestine. The evil leaven would have soon dispersed itself through the entire mass, and left no vestige of that character by which Israel should be kept separate among the nations, had not the command been given, "Ye shall destroy them utterly, that they teach you not to do after all their abominations which they have done unto their gods." For indeed it is to their want of perfect obedience to this precept that the subsequent apostasies are principally traceable. The instances in which the injunction was neglected in particular parts of the sacred territory, where Canaanites were still allowed to remain, are mentioned in subsequent portions of this book, as so many inlets of evil, and consequent causes of Divine judgment.

The considerations thus detailed, in connexion with the scheme of Divine revelation, will therefore sufficiently vindicate God's proceeding against a people, who, in despite of his patience with them, had disobeyed his will, and introduced abominations that He hated into their religion and public institutions. For whatever God might do immediately by the powers of nature at his command, He might commission his chosen servants to execute; while He explained to them sufficiently the grounds of his judgment, and suffered not their evil passions to mar his work: while also a caution, most necessary to the world at that time, was ever added, that Israel should not fall under the dominion of the like abominations. And so sufficient are these considerations for the

purpose for which they are adduced, that, as it has been observed by a great bishop of our Church,—the only serious difficulty in such acts of the supreme Lord, is the *scandal* of them; or, in other words, the facility with which they may be abused, as they have been, by men of fanatical or distempered minds, as though the same obligation were imposed on all who assumed themselves to be God's chosen people at any time, as lay on his people of old, to employ sanguinary violence for the eradication of idolatry, or whatever they may possibly consider as equivalent to it. But ought it not to be sufficient here also, that the Divine commission in Israel's case is so marked and express, so proved by signs and wonders, and the ineffaceable marks that separate this nation from all others, as at once to set the brand of most wilful and inexcusable presumption on those who should assume the same right, where none of these marks existed? The absence of all commission were of itself sufficient to condemn every such assumption, and every conduct springing from it, which has found followers or admirers among men; and thus to vindicate the act of God in the establishment of His ancient people from every share in the legitimate production of such scandals. And added to the flagrant want of Divine commission, is the peculiar inconsistency of every such revival of Judaism with the spirit and character of the New Dispensation; when it is declared so emphatically that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, nor to be maintained by the same belligerent methods that befit earthly

states; that of this great society the weapons are not carnal but spiritual, the arms which the Divine Founder has bequeathed, and which his Spirit has made effectual, for laying lofty imaginations prostrate, and subduing the thoughts of men to the obedience of Christ.

And what then is the moral conclusion to which this memorable subject should conduct us? First, undoubtedly, to impress on our minds an awful sense of those impieties by which judgments like these were brought down upon a whole people of the same nature and passions and original constitution with ourselves. That we never lose our sense of the evils of false religion, in which such abominations are naturally engendered, by any of the palliative theories which the specious liberalism of the world might set up; nor abate our zeal, our prayers, and our exertions for their extirpation, when God, that disposes of the kingdoms of men, has opened the possibilities of this to us;—their extirpation, I say, by the only methods which God has placed in our hands, the mild persuasion, the sober conviction, the invincible goodness and charity of the gospel. Also that we suffer not the worst displays of such evils as they exist in other people or other ages of the world to blind us to the root of such evil which remains even among ourselves—the evil heart of unbelief that makes us insensible to our higher privileges, as were the mass of the Israelites to theirs, and which tempts in various ways to depart from the living God.

And may not, secondly, this subject call us to a

further meditation, according to that plain doctrine of the Apostles and the Christian Church, by which all things in ancient Israel are images and examples to ourselves? Consider Joshua the son of Nun, not only in his personal or official character, in which, however distinguished, he was greatly inferior to his predecessor, his master and law-giver Moses, but in that typical character in which he stands above him, as symbolizing that which the law could not do, the actual introduction of God's people to their promised rest: consider him, finally, as the first JESUS, the first divinely constituted bearer of that most blessed Name at which all things in heaven and earth should hereafter bow,—one whose acts and conquests did, agreeably to that name, prefigure and represent those of the Divine Saviour of the world. “A rest *remaineth* to the people of God,” as the apostolical author of the Epistle to the Hebrews argues—a rest different, as he maintains, from that which Jesus the son of Nave obtained for his people—a rest, into which we are there required to press with an earnestness corresponding to that with which the people of Israel were to press into its earthly type in Canaan¹. To us also there are enemies fierce and formidable to be overcome before we can be established there; and our encouragement to encounter these foes, and not suffer them to enslave or overpower us, is rested in the pages of inspired Scripture on the consideration that we are not under the law, but under grace²: we are not called, like Moses, to

¹ Heb. iii. iv. (1, 2, 7, 8, seq.)

² Rom. vi. 14; vii. 6, &c.

survey from afar the good land into which we enter not ourselves: we are not consigned without help to a law which cannot save, which merely convicts and proves our unworthiness; but we are actually enlisted in baptism under the banner of our Jesus, under whom, as the author of all grace, we may fight and conquer. The waters of Jordan have been passed by His atoning death and resurrection: the cleansing virtue of which has, in the laver of regeneration, been solemnly conveyed to us all. Let then that warfare, on our serious engagement to which, as soldiers of Christ, our eternal life depends, be seriously undertaken and conducted by us: let our opposition to the corruptions which would impede our progress to immortal blessedness be as universal and as unsparing as that of Israel to the Canaanites. Let no evil passion against which we can bring to bear the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, or exercise the means which Christ's Church presents of prayer and fasting, and participation of the celestial nutriment of His sacrifice,—let no such evil principle be allowed, as far as we may, to live or reign within us,—to obstruct and cloud (as, in proportion to its prevalence, it must and ought to cloud) our hope and sure confidence in God. Let our prayers, our endeavours, even when most consciously weak, be directed to their utter extermination; for this is to realize the saving virtue of Christ's Cross, as the holy Scripture represents it, and as the Catholic Church has ever received it: and this with its pains will bring with

it also its ineffable consolations. Thus only shall we enjoy that peace which Christ has bequeathed, and of which His Spirit is the communicator and inspirer; and faint as our success may appear, yet may we finally, with that great company to which these acts unite us, be admitted as more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us.

SERMON VIII.

THE REJECTION OF SAUL.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, July 11, 1841.¹)

1 SAMUEL XV. 28, 29, 30.

And Samuel said, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel: and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

THE history of the unhappy prince whose character and whose fate are sketched briefly in these words of our morning lesson, holds no unimportant place in those records of the early age that were written for our learning. The example presented to us is, indeed, melancholy beyond most others in Scripture; for nothing can be conceived more so than the view of high and honourable hopes issuing in disappointment and the gloom of hopeless reprobation. It is not however on this account the less salutary; and though in this, as in some other instances, our feelings may be in some degree ex-

¹ First preached in India, July 11, 1830.

cited at first in favour of him whom the Almighty rejected, the narrative itself, pursued with any attention to its close, is sufficient to vindicate the Divine proceeding even to our apprehension; to shew, what is the great lesson of revelation, that faithful adherence to God is the only path either of virtue or of happiness; that virtues of other growth without this, not only fail of the highest reward, but prove themselves intrinsically unreal and evanescent.

I would now, therefore, invite your attention to the history of the man, who, in these words of the prophet Samuel, is solemnly rejected by the Almighty from the high place to which he had been as solemnly anointed and consecrated before; and who unites, in the same text, a cold and general confession of his guilt before God, with the expression of his predominant wish—that, however this may be, he may yet be honoured, and retain his full credit among the people. Having seen the character which these few words imply developed in the leading events of his preceding and subsequent life, we may finally enquire, how this case of the disobedient king of Israel applies to Christians, and what instruction we may draw from it, upon whom the ends of all are come, in the last and most perfect revelation of truth and righteousness to the world.

But a short time had elapsed since the people of Israel had asked God, through his prophet Samuel, for a king; and God, to use the words of the prophet Hosea, gave them a king in his anger.

The grant, though coupled with marked displeasure against the erring nation whom nothing else would content, was not, however, accompanied with rejection or hopeless denunciation of their foolish choice. They had sinned greatly, by undervaluing the singular place which God, as their extraordinary ruler and monarch, held in their commonwealth, and preferring in their hearts to all the solid benefit, and all the high distinction, of this theocracy, the exterior decorations of that species of government which they saw exercised over their heathen neighbours. But in conceding this point to their vain fickle humour, even as greater things had been previously conceded to the hardness of their hearts, the substance of the theocracy is still to be preserved; and its inviolate maintenance is made the condition of God's continued protection, under the new form of government which they had chosen for themselves. The king to be anointed was to hold his crown upon these terms only, of obedience to Jehovah the God of Israel his supreme Lord: on condition of his punctually executing all the orders which the Lord by the supernatural means then ordinarily exercised had to communicate, he might possess the same insignia of royalty with other sovereigns, and claim a right to the people's fealty and allegiance. The people also were given to understand that such was the relation in which they stood to God as their paramount Sovereign. "Now, therefore," said Samuel to them, "behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired: and behold,

the LORD hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the LORD and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandments of the LORD, then shall both you and the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God. But if ye shall still be disobedient, ye shall be consumed, both you and your king."

The man selected for this high office was one who appeared admirably adapted for fulfilling the people's object in desiring a king. He was of the youngest branch of the house of Israel; but in nobleness and comeliness of person he exceeded all the rest of the people: and the qualities of his mind, displayed in his first exploits against the enemy, corresponded with the dignity of his outward appearance; he was possessed of valour, ability, and zeal: nor does he appear to have wanted any requisite for the discharge of his duties, but that which is indeed the principal one—a spirit of pious trust in, and obedience to, his God. That the absence of this quality was in some respect manifest in his ordinary demeanour, appears probable from the exceeding surprise occasioned among his acquaintance, when the prophetic Spirit came upon him as the Lord's anointed, and the exclamation which, then forced from their lips, became thenceforward a proverb in Israel; "Is Saul also among the prophets?" This remark, which we find at the very outset of his career, is repeated in a similar manner at a more advanced period of his reign, when he prophesied before Samuel and David; and evinces that from first to last there

was something strange and fitted to excite astonishment in the spectacle of such a one as he was becoming a subject of divine inspiration¹. We may conceive him to have been from the first an impetuous, self-willed man, known to be unrestrained by controlling religious principle from anything to which his active spirit felt inclined; yet, like many other irreligious persons, not on this account generally offensive to those that surrounded him. The character assigned to him in the funeral song composed by that neighbour of his that was better than he, proves, after every allowance that can be made for the eulogistic tone of the composition, that Saul possessed in no common degree the qualities that procure regard from men: for when coupled with one whose goodness is unquestionable, it is said that "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." At the time of his election to the throne, we find that his manly qualities procured him universal popularity; his noble forbearance towards the disaffected men who resisted his appointment, and his interference to screen them from the general indignation, was well calculated to confirm that popularity, and to invest him with some marks of a really great character². It remained to be shewn, under the greater trials which extended power brought with it, how this appearance, or this real degree of goodness, could be depended upon.

Were we to conceive that God, in his inscru-

¹ 1 Sam. x. 11, 12; xix. 24.

² Ibid. x. 27; xi. 12, 13.

table wisdom, ordained the election by lot of a man of defective virtue, in order to show to the people, more convincingly than by mere denunciation, the folly of the choice they had made, and to afford also in the conduct of his appointed successor, the man after God's own heart, the contrast between the ways of God and of man,—between a solid and an unreal virtue,—we should conceive nothing that is not strictly agreeable to the analogy of divine revelation. Certain however it is, that after a single year of fidelity, as the sacred narrative has been understood¹, in the next recorded event of his forty years' reign, and when he has an adult son fighting with him against the Philistines, he gave but too marked proofs of that self-willed spirit which was his ruin. Refusing to wait, in a time of difficulty and danger, for the coming of the prophet and priest whom God had provided for that purpose, he hastened to offer the prescribed sacrifices without him—an offence which, if taken to mean the actual assumption by himself on this occasion of the sacrificial ministeries limited to the house of Aaron, closely resembled that for which Korah and his company were consumed by fire in the wilderness, and that for which one of his successors, Uzziah, was, not long after, smitten with leprosy. If, however, he only performed this sacrifice, as some think more probable, by the ministry of the priests and Levites in his camp, it was still a contempt of the direction which he could receive only from Almighty God through his prophetic

¹ 1 Sam. xiii. 1.

messenger—a direction most necessary to be observed at that calamitous period of the Hebrew history, when the ark of God had been disastrously removed from its ancient residence, and left His house at Shiloh desolate, and when the place where alone by Moses' law the solemn sacrifices were to be offered, had not yet been authoritatively transferred to Mount Sion and Jerusalem. The offence, therefore, of Saul, taken under the lightest view of it, indicated a disposition to violate the solemn compact under which he was elected to the throne—a disposition to make his own prerogative include everything, and to let all the statutes of the Almighty, and the fearful judgments by which they had been maintained before all Israel, weigh nothing against his individual will and pleasure. Accordingly the intimation of God's future purpose respecting the kingdom is then first made to him: "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God which he commanded thee: for then would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue." The expedition begun under such inauspicious circumstances, is marked with fresh proof of the wilfulness and folly of the king. By a hasty imprecation, pronounced upon the people at large, he implicates himself in the fearful obligation of taking away the life of his innocent and valiant son; and he is only prevented by the interposition of the people for their beloved prince from doing that which, notwithstanding his grief and horror,

he declares himself with an oath determined to do, rather than forfeit his rash word. The campaign is successful notwithstanding, and, at the close of it, the evil of his past disobedience and rashness seems, as it were, forgotten. He appears as if he had yet a chance offered him of retaining the kingdom by altering his conduct, and observing strictly the commandments of the Lord that anointed him.

The command given at the commencement of the chapter before us seems to prove this. The order to exterminate the sinners of Amalek is urged upon him on the authority of the God who has anointed him to be king—the rule under which alone Israel abode in prosperity and peace—and he is charged to be the unsparing instrument of the Divine vengeance in this particular. It is not now necessary to enter into the question which was before us a few Sundays since in the case of the Canaanites—the question of God's right to punish a wicked people in this manner, and of making his own people under the old economy the instruments of execution. But to one branch of that subject we may now in passing recur: I mean the care taken, if we may so speak reverently, by the Almighty himself, to preclude all possibility of just occasion for that abuse of his precept to the ancient people, which is so easily made, and which constitutes by far the greatest scandal and difficulty of the case to us in these distant ages. The persons in later times who, notwithstanding the dispensation of things so fundamentally altered, and without a shadow of express commission to themselves,

have yet fanatically assumed the right of dealing with idolaters, or those whom they choose to esteem such, as Israel was commanded to deal with the Amalekites, those men's blinded conscience under the light of the gospel is ever so coupled with wilfulness and human passion, as to evince clearly the working of corrupt and earthly motive mixed with the zeal which they assert for God's cause. Amidst their loud professions of superior purity, we perceive that the spoils of Babylon are in their eye, and excite their envy rather than their abhorrence: they who would abhor idols, abhor not to commit sacrilege for their own gain; and the general disgust which the ambition of such pretended saints has excited, whenever God, for the sins of his people, has made their cause dominant for a while in the world, has become for generations after the fruitful occasion for profane spirits to blaspheme those oracles of God which had been so wretchedly misused and perverted. But let us observe the contrast which those oracles themselves exhibit on more than one occasion. When a wicked people is devoted to judicial destruction, we find often, not their idols only, but all their goods, all that could tempt the cupidity of earthly men to join in exterminating them in God's name, that they might seize on their inheritance,—placed under the mysterious ban of the Divine curse: and when an Achan in God's camp has secreted to himself any of the accursed thing, be it but a Babylonish garment, or some shekels of silver, or a wedge of gold, the camp cannot move forward till

the trespass is brought to light, and the offender destroyed, together with the booty that tempted him: and a valley of Achor testifies to all after generations of the chosen seed, the fearful consequence of making the spoliation of God's enemies an instrument of personal covetousness¹. And thus too here, when Amalek, long after, is to be smitten with divine vengeance, all that they possessed—camel and ass, and ox and sheep—are to share the fate of their wicked masters: nothing of that which in the ruder ages of mankind most lured the rapacity of worldly conquerors, is allowed for spoil to the commissioned destroyer,—either to satiate his lust of gain, or to swell the pride of his triumph.

Mark then especially, in the history now before us, how the commission is regarded by a man who seems placed before us in Scripture for this end, to exemplify human and carnal motives taking the place of zeal for God. He is well pleased to be at the head of a warlike expedition against the enemies of his people; nor does the idea of their extirpation at all disquiet or displease him. He shewed indeed in another instance, in his wish to exterminate the Gibeonites, who dwelt peaceably in the midst of Israel by express compact since the days of Joshua, and that, as the sacred historian tells us, “in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah,”—he shewed, I say, in this that his patriotic zeal, unhallowed by religion, was equally destitute of any scrupulousness from excess of mercy: his faithless conduct towards those

¹ Jos. vii. Deut. xiii. 14—17. (Vid. excep. Num. xxxi. 22, 23; Jos. viii. 27).

helpless strangers, which proved, through God's just judgment, the means of his last and worst punishment, the final excision of his deposed race from Israel¹, shews that he could never have hesitated from motives of pity to destroy those bitter and active enemies of his nation, the sons of Amalek. He readily hears the command to conquer and to destroy; but wherever the order of God does not coincide with what is alone his animating principle in the undertaking, his own pride and ambition, he is both determined to violate it, and prompt in finding excuses for the violation. While, therefore, after the conquest he destroys willingly the mass of the people, and all the inferior animals they possessed, the king he would reserve as a living trophy of his victory, and the best of the oxen and the sheep as magnificent spoils: and then to silence what he perfectly knew to be the express Divine command imposed upon him, he has the argument of policy and expediency, with that of pretended piety superadded, that he might have wherewith to make a splendid sacrifice to the LORD God in Gilgal. The indignant prophet observes on this, that what was required by the LORD, as by all commanders from their subordinate agents, was simple obedience, even when the ground of the particular order was unknown; that He was infinitely more pleased with this, even for the sake of the person who reposed this implicit faith in Him, than with any sacrifice whatever; especially with a holocaust like this, in which ostentation and self-

¹ 2 Sam. xxii. 1, 2, seq.

exaltation were the principal ingredients. But in the whole of this dialogue between the king and the prophet, the most remarkable feature is the impenitent character of the offender, as far as impenitence can be shewn by the most determined self-excuse for transgression, and the adoption of any course, even after conviction, rather than that of true humiliation and amendment. The reasons of policy and affected religion are pressed as far as they could go, with all the air at first of one who felt himself perfectly innocent of any violation, either in spirit or letter, of the orders so distinctly communicated to him. When convicted, he makes that to be the act of the people, and the result of their influence upon him, which was evidently his wish no less than theirs, and in a far more eminent degree chargeable on him than on them; since he was their anointed ruler and guide in the ways of God, so that compared to him they were guiltless. And when the severe announcement of his disobedience, and its fatal consequences to the stability of his dynasty, at length forces from him the acknowledgment that he has sinned in this matter, he couples his confession with a request indicating how far even then was his mind from that of a true penitent. He intreats Samuel to aid him in maintaining that fair appearance before the people, the hope of which constituted the chief motive of his disobedience; to countenance his sacrifice by his presence and assistance at the solemnity; that he may not appear, after the splendid victory over the enemy, as one who was in the

least under the displeasure of God and his prophetic messenger. It needs not much penetration to perceive how diametrically opposite to repentance for the great error he had committed, was this sentiment and request, uttered on an occasion like this, directly after the intimation of an actual displeasure from God, so great as to cost him his kingdom. How opposite to the sentiment of Eli, who, on the intimation from this same Samuel, when a child, of a judgment very nearly resembling this, but more severe in some touching and trying particulars, answers only, that it is the LORD; absorbed in the consideration of the infinite Sovereign whose judgment he had provoked, by forbearing to exercise his own coercive authority over his sons and his people; an offence for which, notwithstanding what nature might have suggested, he offers no word of defence or palliation. Again, how pointedly contrasted is Saul's demeanour on this occasion to that of the man after God's own heart, who was to supersede him in his kingdom! When arrested after the commission of sins, more heinous in themselves than that of Saul, by the prophetic announcement of his guilt, and the awful judgments of the Most High that it had provoked, David has no thought in his mind comparable to that of having offended God; and both to the prophet of the LORD, who pronounced absolution on his penitent confession, and in the Psalm in which he has embodied his penitence, he expresses this sentiment to his Maker, "Against Thee only have I sinned;" since, compared with His

piercing inspection, the judgment of men, though injured and scandalized by his sin, became as it were nothing: and he who says in that Psalm, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it thee," knowing that the Mosaic system provided no sacrifice that would purge sins like this, (but a broken and a contrite heart was all he had to offer,) he would not assuredly have thought it too much to make the most public and humiliating confession of his scandalous crime, had God exacted this from him as a proof of repentance. But Saul, who was as little required as David to give *this* proof of his confession being sincere, has no feeling which could induce him under any circumstances to manifest it. Flushed with the pride of his recent triumph, he will not think of the Almighty displeasure, nor even of the deposition of his line that is the fruit of it,—if he can only now be honoured before the people and elders of Israel, and be recognized by the prophet as a true worshipper and servant of the God whom he has so deeply offended.

The subsequent behaviour of this unhappy man, during what remained of his now overcast and unprosperous reign, which he yet held to the close of his own life, furnishes a too sad and appropriate comment on these sentiments, when first convicted of disobedience. He has still no real repentance, no real desire or hope of amendment of his heart and conduct towards God: his fears and his sorrows turn solely on the consequences of his sin, never on the evil root from which they

sprang; and to the multitudes in like circumstances, whom past misconduct has involved in trouble of any kind, he affords a most awful example of the sorrow of the world which worketh death; the sorrow which, excluding repentance and return to God, turned even his best qualities to bitterness; the zeal and public spirit he once possessed, being now merged in selfish discontent, and the kinder feelings of nature, of which he is never wholly devoid, insufficient to restrain him from acts that were odious, perfidious, and cruel. His whole conduct towards David exhibits the conflict in his mind between generous and confiding admiration of a heroism greater than his own, and a corroding envy against one whom he knew to have been anointed by God's prophet future king of Israel, to the exclusion of his own line of descendants. Repentance *before* might have averted this dreaded consequence, and repentance *now* might alleviate it to his wounded spirit; but the unhappy man, who has neglected to commune with God, engages, as the evil spirit masters him, in a desperate struggle with Omnipotence. The presence of the youth whom God has favoured, and the friendship of his own son Jonathan for him, are sources of perpetual exasperation to him; he proceeds to ensnare, and at length to proscribe the man whom he had even joined in close alliance to himself: his heart swells with rage at the priests of the Lord, whom he suspects of countenancing him, and he uses the sword of a wicked descendant of Edom to slay those ministers of

God, whom no Israelite, even of the worst sort, could be found to aid him in destroying. As Herod afterwards sought to slay the infant son of David, as a supposed rival to his throne, so does he, from the same motives, and with scarcely less malice, hunt out David to destruction; and when the magnanimity of the yet loyal object of his persecution is twice displayed towards him, in the preservation of his life while in his power, the impulses of better nature which then smite him with compunction, and move him to sincere acknowledgment of his flagrant injustice, and for a time to entire abandonment of his treacherous purpose, are yet overpowered by the evil spirit that obtains the dominion in his heart; against whose influence he has abandoned the only real security, prayer and devotion to God. At length, broken in spirit by continual disappointment and increased adversity, feeling but too bitterly that God has deserted him, he sadly remembers the man of God whose early counsels he forsook; and though Samuel has been now dead some years, he imagines that the ghost of Samuel, could he but obtain a sight of him, might supply the direction he required. With this hope, the strange and desperate hope of one who had forsaken God, he has recourse to a sorceress, one of a deceitful impious race whom he had himself, in happier days, banished from Israel; and it is the will and pleasure of the Almighty, that the spirit of Samuel should indeed appear on this occasion to the unhappy king, and, as the good son of Sirach has

declared¹, prophesy his approaching end, with the actual delivery of the kingdom to his rival. Dejected, but yet impenitent,—for no sorrow for his conduct to that rival, for his murder of God's priests, or for that neglect of God as his sovereign, which had led to all his other crimes, appears to occupy him for an instant,—he returns from that extraordinary conference, and on the next day falls by his own sword, at the close of a disastrous conflict with the Philistines.

Are we then affected at the melancholy end of one whose commencement was so promising, and whose characteristic sin, as the text and other places describe it, may be said to be summed up in that sentence of our Lord to the Jews, that he sought honour from men, but cared not for the honour which cometh from God only? Let us then beware of that offence under our far less excusable circumstances now; for though no crimes like those of Saul may, through the good providence of God, result from our evil choice, its consequences to the soul are fatal notwithstanding. It is not the stern mandate of the Jewish theocracy by which we are reminded how much more excellent is the Creator than the creature, and how infinitely more his commandments require the allegiance of our inmost hearts, than all the opposing influences of the fleeting world. It is the dispensation of that merciful Sovereign, our Lord and Saviour, in whom the sure mercies of David, announced by all the prophets, are centred;

¹ Ecclus. xlvi. 20. 1 Sam. xxviii. 16—19.

with reference to whom the LORD made that faithful oath to David, from which He should not swerve or repent under any circumstance, that of the fruit of his body should one be raised up to sit on his throne eternally¹. It is his kingdom of grace, which, agreeably to that Divine promise, was commenced from his sacrifice and exaltation, and will ever continue in the world: and in the ordinances of that Divine kingdom, if we faithfully observe and comply with them, we have the pledges of our participation in that victory, which having overcome sin and death, will bruise under our feet all the fearful enemies of our salvation. In his Church, his word and his sacraments, we have the source of salvation, and the path of truth and holiness made plain before us; and are made to see, with far better evidence than the sacrifices of the Mosaic law could impart, that the one great thing which the LORD our God requires from us, in answer to his infinite mercies in Christ Jesus, is to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. Let us not then content ourselves with a partial obedience, which cannot reach the meaning of those pregnant words; let us not content ourselves with a partial excision of those spiritual Amalekites, those lusts of the flesh and the devil, which we are commanded to forswear and to crucify; or choose from out of our Lord's revelation such things only as suit our humours, our fancy or prejudice; whilst others no less un-

¹ Ps. cxxxii. 11, &c.

equivocally contained in the system he has bequeathed to us, are set aside, because our selfishness or our pride, or perchance our love of excitement, meets no pleasure or satisfaction from them. For this is the very conduct of Saul, who made exceptions wherever he would in the Divine prescription, and sought to make up the defect of obedience by larger sacrifices of his own choosing: and assuredly the conduct which was so severely visited under the old dispensation, will not, if the arguments of the apostles have any weight, be overlooked now, when they are least excusable. Let us avoid that guilt, and that condemnation, by the one path that is yet by God's grace open to us,—by studying to acquaint ourselves with that scheme of mercy under which we live, by faithful meditation on the revealed word and will of God; by familiarizing our hearts with its truths, its motives, and requisitions, and resolving in that strength, without which we can do nothing, to adhere to it constantly in life and in death.

SERMON IX.

DAVID'S SIN AND CHASTISEMENT.

(Preached at St Mary's on the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, July 18, 1841¹.)

2 SAMUEL XII. 9, 10.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house.

THE event to which these words relate is one of painful and fearful interest. It is an instance of flagrant wickedness, without parallel in holy writ, when considered as issuing from one who had been distinguished as a servant of God,—one too who, after his penitence, was again so admitted and regarded. To learn the true mind of the Scripture which has recorded with such unshrinking fidelity the crime of one of its principal worthies, and thus to answer the purpose of the Church in proposing the history in its sad detail to our attention, I would now enlarge on the chief features of the message here delivered by God's prophet to his guilty sovereign.

¹ First preached in India, July 18, 1830.

On the first point to which Nathan's words direct our thoughts, the accumulated *guilt* of David, it is indeed distressing to dwell; nor is it expedient to enlarge further than is required in order to exhibit it as a warning,—a sad memorial of human frailty and corruption. It may well perplex good Christians to conceive how one, possessed of eminent piety and virtue, could have been thus led to the commission, not only of a single act of heinous sin, speedily emerged from and repented, but a series of deadly sins, continued during a period of considerable length, and accompanied with deliberation and contrivance. The progress of evil will however appear but too natural and inevitable, when once the first safeguards of piety were fully broken through: these once removed, there is nothing very difficult to account for in the dark series that followed, advancing in flagitiousness and baseness to its summit; and while our abhorrence should not be lessened, our astonishment were better and more profitably transferred to another feature in the history. It is wonderful that a man who had once fallen from real religion to so shocking a depth as this; who had so blinded his heart to its evil and enormity, as it is evident David had done till the period of the address in my text; it is most wonderful, I say, that such a man should have acceptably repented. I do not say it is wonderful that God should accept his repentance, but that his repentance under such circumstances should be vital and real; that his mind should ever truly recover from so deadly a shock to previous religion

and good conscience, so as to retrace with godly sorrow and remorse of heart his downward steps from rectitude, and look with confirmed horror and pain, not on the consequences of sin, but on the sin itself, as hateful in God's sight, after being so long insensible and dead in conscience to that consideration. This resuscitation from its dead sleep of a conscience once alive and active, (though the recovery was never such as to restore him to his former healthful alacrity in religion), seems a moral miracle far greater than the awakening and conversion of one who had been ever before a heedless sinner. In this, however, it is the more eminent instance of the grace and mercy of God: in this light it becomes us ever to regard it; and in dependence on that grace on which alone all our hopes must rest of pardon for past offences, or security from future ones, so to hold forth the example that God's Holy Spirit has presented to us, as to guard, by the most awful warning, against the disposition to abuse it.

The source of David's sin is well known; it is that by which, as his wise son declares, many strong men have been slain; and against which the only security is found, (as he, and as a greater than Solomon, has assured us,) in "keeping the heart with all diligence," in watching and checking the first emotions of the heart towards all that is forbidden. Had this care been observed, as it ought and might have been by David, never would his passion have been suffered to grow, till the time when it became clear to him

that its innocent gratification was an impossibility; nor would he then, in the moral darkness which his cherished passion had induced, have sought means to violate one of the most sacred and holy of God's commandments. In this, to his great unhappiness, he is successful: and had his guilt reached no further than this fearful point,—had he then directly experienced that bitterness of repentance, which might well be suggested by the consciousness of such foul and scandalous sin in a religious king, and poured it forth to his God in the accents of heart-stricken contrition,—the example would even then be a most awful one, teaching him that thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall; that to rise after such a fall is a matter of fearful uncertainty, as well as difficulty; and that when the rise is real, there is bitter sorrow, far counterbalancing the pleasures of sin, in the reflections even of pardoned guilt. But such was not the case here: else much of the deeper scandal would have been spared which has given the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme, as the prophet declared, even to this day. If the beginnings of such repentance ever occurred to David at this stage of his guilt, they were overpowered by the continued temptation, the complacency in the past and present, and subsequently by a more appalling and distracting consideration. The consequences of his crime threatened exposure at no great distance; and exposure by the law of Moses would be followed by the death of the adulteress; a penalty sure to be exacted by the injured party,

a foreigner of the children of Heth, yet enlisted in David's military service against the Ammonites. Here, then, the now wretched king is thrown upon those devices of concealment which guilt of this horrible kind makes necessary, and which add so fearfully to its other debasing and demoralizing tendencies. On pretence of a message of business, he procures the temporary return of the injured man from the camp to Jerusalem, in hopes that by this means suspicion may be averted, and a spurious offspring afterwards safely obtruded on him. Here, however, the point of honour of an eastern soldier disappoints this crafty contrivance. Though quite unconscious of the deep injury he has sustained, nothing will tempt Uriah, though waiting in Jerusalem on the king, to betake himself to his own home there, while the siege is going on at which he is engaged, and while Joab and the sons of Israel are dwelling in tents. And after trying in vain some unworthy and base contrivances to overpower this resolution, David then finds he has no means of averting shame from himself, and a terrible death from the object of his attachment, so long as Uriah lives. From wishing he were dead, the transition is too rapid and easy to taking steps for accomplishing the wish; especially in those to whom God has granted the fearful and dangerous deposit of earthly power. Thus, then, the last point in this dreadful gradation is reached; a point from which he would have certainly recoiled with horror, had it been presented to him at first as an insepa-

nable adjunct of the sin. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin," saith St James; "and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Spiritual death, in its most hideous and ghastly form, is here; "for ye know," saith St John, "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Not indeed by poison or assassination, but by means equally effectual, and therefore equally murderous, does the wicked king seek to remove his unsuspecting victim: in the words now before us, he would slay him by the sword of the children of Ammon. Accordingly, Joab the king's general, a bad and unscrupulous man, and a fit deposit for such a trust, is instructed to take the first opportunity of stationing Uriah where the fight is hottest and most desperate: the unfortunate man, ignorant alike of the disgrace or the treachery, meets the death of a soldier: the tidings are carried to the king; and the honour of Bathsheba is saved by David taking her to wife. And in this termination of the difficulties which his first crime accumulated on him, he is utterly blind to the dreadful abyss of guilt in which he has plunged himself, and in which he appears as if he were swallowed up without redemption. Not, perhaps, that he was wholly free from misgiving on the subject. The cruel method he had taken to rid himself of an innocent and faithful servant, cannot possibly have been a matter of easy reflection to him: but he probably blinded his conscience to its wickedness by reflecting that Uriah was thus spared the misery

worse than death, which the discovery of the truth would have caused him; and that instead of this distress and shame, he had but died as all honourable men of his class are content or even ambitious to die. Thus he not improbably reasoned; but *the thing which he had done*, it is said emphatically, *displeased the Lord*; and that displeasure is to be brought home to him, in a manner which such shallow sophistries could not evade, and from which his guilty success should impart to him no consolation.

The method by which the prophet Nathan, under the guidance of Almighty inspiration, carried this message of conviction and judgment, is the next point in the history which demands our attention and admiration. There are several modes in which a sinner's conscience might be touched, who was not hardened beyond the possibility of self-condemnation; and many of them, we might imagine, could have been employed with great advantage here. The very names of adultery and of murder, the violations of two of the most sacred commands of the second table, would carry with them an appalling sound to one who had once known what it was to love God, and to fear offending him by sin; and if affecting circumstances were required to strengthen this assault of conviction to the heart of him who had violated the divine laws so fearfully, such might be found in the faithfulness of the doomed Uriah to his king,—the zeal, unconscious of injury, with which he had even encountered death in his service,—

a death so treacherously prepared for him by the act of the sovereign, and only in execution the act of the enemy. But the prophet does not commence with these topics of heinous aggravation; nor does he even proceed to tax David as a violator of the sixth and seventh commandments of God. He attaches himself to one feature alone of criminality in this transaction, the sin of coveting what was another's; the violation of that last and most heart-searching precept of the second table, is that which he would bring home to the conscience of the king; since penitence, to be real and salutary, must reach the ground of the evil to be repented; and from this as its source, David's more atrocious and glaring violations of the two former prohibitions most naturally and necessarily proceeded. He had presumed to disregard that most equitable law of God which is itself the fulfilling of all the commandments, which relate to men—which requires to view in everything the claim of another as if it were his own. And then how heinous was the offence in David's case, himself an absolute prince with everything that he could reasonably wish at his command; his victim, one who had nothing to depend on for earthly happiness, but that of which the licentiousness and cruelty of his king had deprived him! Viewed in connexion with these circumstances, the parable related by Nathan of the rich and the poor man—the rich man refraining from the use of his own numerous flocks and herds, to seize upon that lamb which was the single cherished

possession of the other,—will indeed appear singularly felicitous and admirable.

If the method of the prophet be thus admirable, most wonderful, on the other hand, must appear the moral blindness which found no parallel to its own guilt in this narration, even when conceived to be the statement of an actual and recent event. With the indignation that injustice and oppressive cruelty naturally excite in the hearts of men, and which bad men can so often feel with respect to the ill deeds of others, he declares that the man who did this deed should die, and should meet with no pity, as he shewed none. And then at length the prophet declares, “Thou art the man”; explains the case of the rich man to be but an inadequate allegorical representation of his own vile conduct to his Gentile subject; and since all offences against our fellow-creatures, and the equitable law regarding them as ourselves, resolve themselves ultimately into sins against God, the God who made all alike, and whom we are bound to love supremely with all our hearts and minds, he proceeds to charge upon the convicted king the heinousness of his ingratitude to the Most High. He details the benefits of the Almighty to him; how he had delivered him from the hands of Saul, and exalted him from an humble station to be a king over his people Israel; how he had given him abundant possessions and the means of every lawful gratification; and then introduces the earnest expostulation of my text; “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandments of the

Lord to do evil in His sight?" Why are all these great benefits, and the obligation consequent upon them to approve thyself a man after God's own heart—so lightly esteemed, so forgotten and cast aside, as in this display of selfishness and cruelty?

To this expostulation is naturally annexed the announcement of the divine judgments. For sins of so deep a dye as this cannot escape his righteous and conspicuous vengeance, even though a timely and condign repentance may have averted their eternal penalty from the soul of the sinner. It is not to the honour of God's moral government, it is not for the good of the penitent sinner himself, that those judgments should be evaded, whereby he may be reminded sensibly that it is an evil and a bitter thing to follow the devices of his own heart,—to give way to a distempered will, and violate the clear commands of his Almighty Benefactor and Lord. "Thou hast slain Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the children of Ammon: now therefore shall the sword never depart from thy house." Nor is the blood-guiltiness only of this act, but its licentiousness also, to be visited on the family of the wretched man who, in despite of conscience and duty, had been guilty of this enormity. Awfully indeed was this denunciation realized: nor is anything more conspicuous in the after history of David than this, the series of fearful domestic calamities which pursued him even to the verge of life, in a family from which the spirit of the Mosaic re-

ligion might have led him to expect such an increase of honour and happiness. The shocking history of his children, Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom—the sanguinary vengeance taken by the last on the detestable lasciviousness and cruelty of the first,—all were well adapted to show the king the evil fruit of the same passions he had himself so fatally indulged. Nor does the judgment stop here: the rebellion of the last-named wicked son, which procured to the father a temporary exile from his kingdom, is attended also with a judgment on that father's offence so conspicuous that all Israel shall be its witness,—and read in the shameful and abominable penalty, God's judgment on the secret guilt admitted by their anointed sovereign.

Nor is this judgment upon David's house confined to what occurred during his own life or immediately after; the murder, at a domestic feast, of the incestuous Amnon, his first-born,—the slaughter, in battle, of the rebel Absalom his favourite,—and the judicial death, after his decease, of Adonijah, his presumptive heir. God had indeed before secured to David a covenant that he should never wholly reject his line, as he had rejected that of Saul, however great might be the crimes which might provoke his temporary vengeance against them individually or their people. Whatever might be their personal character or doom, the true Son of David, the Christ of God—His Eternal Son incarnate,—should in due time spring from his race, for the salvation of Israel and of mankind. Still the sword should not

depart from his house before that period should arrive, as the prophetic messenger to the now guilty king has announced. One peaceful reign did indeed follow his warlike and troubled one, that of Solomon, the son of David and of Bathsheba, who was in this the type of that future son, the Prince of Peace; and who was, on this account, to have the honour which was denied to the blood-stained David, of building a temple to the Lord. But sadly was the close of even this reign overcast by apostasy and the prospect of impending evil. Soon came the revolt and separation of the ten tribes of Israel from David's house; the desolating wars in which Rehoboam and his descendants were engaged with their brethren of Ephraim, as well as with the surrounding heathen nations, and (notwithstanding the effect of some few good characters among them, of Hezekiah and Josiah especially, towards averting the impending calamity,) the final destruction of their capital with fire and sword by the Chaldeans. And though after seventy years' captivity an edict of restoration took place, and Zorobabel, a branch of David's house, went up to restore and to build Jerusalem, yet is no royalty restored to that house; the whole tribe of Judah, comprising the family of its mighty monarch, is involved in the tumult of strife and war; and when national independence has been won, the rule is not theirs; they are subject to brethren of another tribe, and then again to aliens. Nor is any peaceful kingdom its portion, except that which God, who foretold David's penitence and pardon, had assured to him

for ever, the promise of that Son who was at the same time his Lord, to whose sceptre should be the gathering of the Gentiles; who was to rule for ever over the house of Jacob, the true Israel, the Catholic Church of God; and of whose kingdom there should be no end.

The effect of these denunciations on the convicted offender is now the only subject which remains to claim our attention. And David said unto Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." A confession not merely of words, like that of his unhappy predecessor, who continued in self-will and disobedience, but proceeding from a deep, self-abasing conviction of his foul offence against men, and his ingratitude to God; a conviction proved not only by the expression of it which we have elsewhere in scripture, but in the pious and penitent character of his after life: for whatever blemishes or weaknesses may be discovered there, the fruits apparently for the most part of this dreadful fall, we have the testimony of the sacred historian, that there was nothing amounting to a departure from God beside this. And God who sees the inmost heart, pronounced, immediately on his first confession, that sentence by the mouth of his prophet, which remitted the worst personal consequences of his sin,—that divine wrath and malediction extending to eternity which is the sure portion of all impenitent offenders; "The Lord hath also put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Yet the preceding severe temporal judgments are not even by this absolution removed:

neither will the prophet suffer his visit to appear in any other light than as a message from the LORD of immediate and signal judgment. For he proceeds to denounce as closely impending the death of the offspring of this adultery ; a sentence required no less for the admonition of the guilty parents themselves, than of all the people of Israel, to whom this scandalous iniquity was made known.

But the deportment and feeling of the convicted and humbled monarch are best traced in that affecting Psalm which he composed on this special occasion. There we find David, while tracing his sin to its source, that of a nature depraved in all its parts and faculties by the original transgression, yet in no degree making this an excuse for his crime, or (as many are now induced to do by the prevalence of partial and unsound views of religion,) making unfelt and hyperbolical statements of that impure spring of sin to stand instead of particular acknowledgement of his own deviation from God's commandments, and forfeiture of that character of innocence which by God's grace and covenant might have been his. For he adds, that notwithstanding the corruption of nature, God requireth truth in the inward parts ; that in the secret depths of the heart He could yet make him to understand wisdom. He declares the freedom of the Almighty Judge from all participation in his act by inevitable decree or otherwise ; proclaiming his own absolute inexcusableness, that God, against whom alone he had sinned, might

stand clear in the judgment of his cause. He implores of God to create in him a clean heart and renew a right spirit within him, and adds, "Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it thee;" the law having provided no sacrifice of expiation for moral offences of this kind; its whole system of sacrificial propitiation having effect only as to lighter offences of a ceremonial or temporary kind, as the apostle to the Hebrews largely argues. The only sacrifice that *we* can bring to procure to ourselves the application of God's free pardon, is, under the Old Testament as well as under the New, a penitent heart. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." When with this sole means in his hands of approaching the offended Majesty of heaven, an altered heart, a spirit smitten and broken from the consciousness of transgression, the restitution of Sion to God's favour and protection is implored, as representing the restitution of its founder and king,—when God has been gracious to his inheritance, and built up her walls that were broken and decayed,—then, says David, "shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations; then shall they offer young bullocks upon thine altar."

These last expressions of the Psalm may well remind the Christian reader of the then future Son of David, who should bring peace and restoration to Jerusalem; whose sacrifice and oblation has made that reconciliation for the sins of the whole world,

which no rite of the old law could ever procure; whose one satisfactory oblation is ever commemorated, and its life-giving virtue exhibited, on the Christian altar; through which alone our imperfect penitence, and the sacrifice of our troubled and contrite spirit, could obtain, either before or since, acceptance at the throne of mercy. To this source of mercy, of old approached but implicitly, it is our great privilege, as Christians, regenerated and adopted sons of God, to have explicit recourse on the terms, and, in the sacraments, of the gospel. And whoever, enlightened by the grace of the Son of David, peruses this psalm of his penitent ancestor, and perceives the intense sorrow of spirit which its terms import, will never by any possibility think his acceptance and pardon any argument for venturing on sins in any respect resembling his; even supposing, what we have certainly no right to suppose, that the violation of the grace of baptism, and despite shown to the fuller power and light of the gospel, are things in their nature as reparable as similar offences under the law. For though God does ever accept true repentance, and we have his most gracious assurance to that effect, it is still a most arduous and difficult thing to repent; far more difficult at any time of our lives than thousands who lightly use the term, as a part of religious speech, are disposed to conceive. Few, it is to be feared, are the cases, after the contented practice of deadly sin, in which such repentance has been attained, compared with those in which the vicious

practice has been abandoned, because interest or reputation forbid its continuance; and where, after the so-called reformation, the manner in which the sin is remembered, with a tenderness and complacent esteem of the former self, stands in direct contradiction to the penitence which this example of Holy Scripture exhibits, and which the church of God enjoins, as indispensable for absolution and remission. O then, as it is impossible to tell how any act of sin may taint and colour universally the whole future life,—as this is most especially true of those sins which defile body and mind, which shut out the love of God, and extinguish the sense of all that is high and holy from the heart,—let no one venture on presumptuous transgressions, through the confidence with which Satan would inspire him that he may easily hereafter repent. The chances are fearfully against the possibility of such a recovery; but should it even by God's grace be effected, its pain as well as its difficulty is extreme. We may read it in the terms of this psalm, where it is compared to the setting of broken bones. And who then would not prefer the continued soundness of moral action which, by God's baptismal grace, may be his, to the anguish of a restitution like this? For be assured, that it is only in attention to God's laws, and a diligent care in all respects to comply with them, that we can ordinarily secure and maintain the habitual penitence ever required of us; that contrition of mind for past departures from grace, and present weaknesses and failures,

which makes our confession to be followed with the consolations of Christ, the assurances of his authoritatively communicated pardon, and the confirming grace of his Holy Spirit. The allowance of deadly sin consists not with any true habitual penitence: and with regard to the sins that will ever cleave to us, the adequate repentance necessary to prevent their accumulation to greater guilt continues not without watchful obedience. "There is a sin unto death," says the beloved Apostle; "and there is a sin not unto death," which our continual prayers and devotion prevent from taking fatal effect. These things are said unto us, that we sin not; and it is only when we walk in the light, as God is in the light, forswearing and renouncing every work of darkness, that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

SERMON X.

THE SAMARITANS AND THE JEWS.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 5, 1841.¹)

JOHN IV. 21—23.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and now is, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

THE great purpose of our Saviour's advent upon earth, to die not for his own nation only, but to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, is developed but obscurely during the period of his mortal life. To the chosen disciples of our Lord themselves it is a sealed mystery; a secret not fully revealed to them till the great sacrifice for sin was offered up, and they were enabled, by the subsequent intimations of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim its benefit to all the world. Before this, the commission received by the same apostles was of a more restricted character: the lost sheep of the house of Israel are those whom they are expressly commanded

¹ First preached in India, in 1828.

to gather, with an exclusion, equally express, of strangers of every description : to them alone were the earnest invitations of Christ while on earth, addressed ; and the history of his humiliation, the necessary precursor of the sacrifice and the glory that followed, is summed up by his favoured disciple in that sentence, " He came to *his own*, and *his own* received him not."

Such is the evident testimony of the evangelists on this head. Yet even this comparatively obscure, but momentous and striking period, was not left, on the part of our Lord himself, without some hints and indications of the more extended object of his coming, such as might even then impress his honest and attentive hearers, and such as the Spirit of Truth might bring more distinctly to their recollection hereafter. Such appears to have been the mystical import of that memorable act of Divine power, by which he expelled the buyers and sellers from that precinct of the Lord's house which they had been allowed by undisputed prescription to occupy before : intimating that the Gentiles' court was to be esteemed, equally with their own hallowed inward courts, a real part of the house of God, equally sanctified to the Divine worship, and to be vindicated from profane violation : for which act therefore he cites for his warrant the words of the evangelical prophet : " My house shall be called a house of prayer *for all nations*." Such were the parables by which he intimated intelligibly to the Pharisees, and the more instructed in the oracles they abused, that the vine-

yard of the Lord was about to be taken from them, and given to a nation which should bring forth the fruits thereof. Such, at a period less close to his passion, was his commendation of the Roman Centurion at Capernaum, with the declaration annexed, that many should, like that worthy proselyte, come from distant quarters of the earth, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, while the present children of the kingdom should be cast out. Such, and yet more remarkable, because extended to one yet living in the midst of heathenism, was his gracious commendation addressed to the Syro-phœnician woman. He who declared that he was not sent but to the house of Israel, nor to dispense bread to dogs, but to the children of the household, declares, notwithstanding, that the importunity of faith may obtain what it will, and that the Canaanite of his time may be, like the Rahab of old, inheritor of the righteousness which is by faith. The promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, was now to cease from being, as heretofore, the exclusive charter of his descendants: the promised appearance of that seed from among them should supersede all necessity for their distinct prerogative: the time was coming, it was even now at hand, when its blessing should be thrown open to every tribe and family of the world.

Thus then in our Saviour's life lay the question between Jew and Gentile: a question which in the period that followed exercises all the energy of a St Paul to declare with accuracy to the in-

fant Church. But there was one nation which in strictness of speech belonged to neither of these descriptions: it is the Samaritan nation to which the words of my present text refer. This people was separated from Gentiles by their claim of descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with their professed adherence to the religion and law of Moses; while they were separated from Jews by their rejection of the genuine tradition of the Divine promise, by an unauthorized and schismatical worship. Accordingly they are classed with Gentiles, though distinguished from them, in that direction of our Saviour to the twelve which I have before alluded to; "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now our Lord's intimation of a more extended object of his coming than this, which the after period was to develope more completely, this intimation might have appeared incomplete, had this singular nation been omitted by Him. We might indeed have reasoned that the grace which admitted the heathen Canaanite, should by stronger reason admit the nearer though heretical Samaritan: but we are not left to mere reasoning in this case. Not only the affecting parable of this day's gospel, in which the bright example of adherence to the second great commandment of universal charity is taken from this estranged and hostile nation, but one of the earliest acts of our Lord's personal ministry, seems directed expressly to inform us that the Samaritans were thus in-

cluded—included, as the remoter heathens were not, in the circle to which the message of Christ was first promulgated, while yet their preparation and previous character were essentially different from that which belonged to the legitimate family of Abraham. This is implied in the text, which I have taken from the conversation of our Lord with the woman of Sychar in Samaria,—to the characteristic particulars of which I would now direct your attention. We may observe in the first place how the distinct invitation of this people to the coming reign of grace and truth, was yet accompanied with the equally distinct correction of their error, in reference to the Jews; and further, how the invitation thus given, and accepted by this people, far more readily than by the mass of the better prepared Jews, is a source of admonition to us who have succeeded the ancient Israel, and to whom that state of things which our Lord here announces as close at hand, has been long present and familiar.

Viewing therefore, in the first place, the manner in which the Samaritans are here invited to the approaching spiritual dispensation, nothing can be apparently more condemnatory of their previous religion than the words, “Ye worship ye know not what:” a sentence which is, however, secured from the interpretation of implying either utter infidelity or gross idolatry, by the contrast which follows and limits its meaning; “We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.” The meaning is that the Samaritans were ignorant pre-

tenders in their profession of that religion of Moses which the Jews truly held; and we shall be at no loss to understand this, if we attend to the information given of their origin in the books of the Kings, and what we learn from other sources of their subsequent history and worship. Their ancestors were the mixed people from the more remote East whom the Assyrian king Salmaneser sent to colonize the country once held by the larger branch of the house of Israel,—Ephraim and his brethren of the ten tribes: a people then reclaimed from the grosser idolatries of their ancestors by the judgments that fell on them for profaning a territory once consecrated to the true God, and by the partial instructions as to the old law of the land, which a Jewish priest afforded them. And when they did at length adopt unanimously the profession of the law of Moses, they gave it a novel and false shape to suit their own national purposes, as pretended inheritors of Ephraim and the elder tribes. They did not indeed adopt the same method with the first apostate Jeroboam, nor set up idolatrous ensigns in their borders to steal men's hearts away from Jerusalem; but they recklessly cut off all genuine record of those facts, with every sacred book from which the religious supremacy of Judah and Mount Sion—the royalty of David, and the promised descent of the Messiah from his line—could be learnt by the people. They received only the Pentateuch, or the law of Moses, into their canon of Scripture: and blind to what was even there contained of the blessing of Judah as the ancestor

of the future Prince and Gatherer of the Gentiles, they attached themselves to what they found there of the blessings pronounced on Israel from Mount Gerizim; and vainly inferred that it was there, and there only, in that sacred mountain of the tribe of Joseph and Ephraim, that God's name and worship and sacrifice should be celebrated for ever. There accordingly in the time of Sanballat they fixed their temple and its solemn worship; having done their utmost to oppose the Jews in the rebuilding of their true temple at Jerusalem, at the close of the captivity in Babylon. There also, after they had been subdued by the first of the Asmonean kings, and their temple levelled with the ground, they continued to assert the sanctity of the spot on which it once stood: still they maintained, with persevering zeal and animosity, that it was on this mount Gerizim, and not at Jerusalem, that men ought to worship the LORD God of Israel.

It was to this people, and to the foot of this sacred mountain at Sichem, here called Sychar, that our Saviour addressed Himself on the memorable occasion of the text. The strong mutual hatred of the Jew to the Samaritan formed no obstacle to the Son of God approaching them; nor was his charity towards them impaired by the conviction—the conviction, not of national prepossession, but of Eternal Truth, that in all the points of controversy between the rival nations the Samaritans were wholly in the wrong. He rests on the sacred ground between mounts Gerizim and Ebal, which

Jacob when dying bequeathed to his son Joseph; that one of the twelve patriarchs whom the Samaritans claimed especially for their own, and erroneously thought to be blessed in his descendants, as well as personally, beyond Judah and all his brethren. Here our Lord takes occasion from the well of Jacob that was there, to discourse, according to his divine manner, with a stranger drawing water at the spot, of that water of life which is emphatically the gift of God—the gift of pardon, peace, and purification of the soul from sin,—a gift which excludes the thirst of discontent, or the feverish desire of inferior and unsubstantial blessings, and is to every one who truly receives it a well of water springing up to everlasting life. Our Lord proceeds further: He declares Himself to be the sole bestower of that heavenly gift to man; Himself that incarnate truth and goodness, in the reception of whom, as the preceptor and guide of the spirit, all those blessings of refreshment, purity, and immortality, essentially consist; and he seeks credence to his words, by giving proofs of his omniscience,—by showing himself well acquainted with the previous history, and the present circumstances, of the stranger now before him. The astonished Samaritan, respecting whom there is no necessity for supposing that she was now living in sin, and in whom the past errors of her life, whatever they may have been, had not obscured that perception of moral truth, and that integrity of faith to perceive and embrace it, which Christ ordinarily re-

quired in the hearer of his heavenly mysteries, and drew forth to maturity by his exposition of them,) confesses immediately that her informant is a prophet: none but such as were supernaturally illuminated could have discovered and marked, from the midst of a foreign race, what might have been probably unknown to many of her own countrymen. But her previous religion interferes here with the entireness of her conviction; it is difficult to recognize the prophetic character in a *Jew*. "Our fathers," she observes,—including in that term not her own immediate ancestors only, but the holy patriarchs also, whom the Samaritans challenged as their own,—“our fathers worshipped from time immemorial on this mount of Gerizim; and ye say that it is in Jerusalem where men ought to worship.” But how does our Saviour meet this prejudice, doubtfully introduced by its speaker to weigh against a strong internal conviction? It is evident that he considered not the error as immaterial, or of very inferior consequence: Had this been the case, he would not have introduced, as he does, the formal contradiction of it, in the midst of his answer; thus, as it were, interrupting the discourse on the highest concerns of man with his Maker. But still this assertion of the superior truth of the Jews is clearly subordinate in our Lord’s discourse: He begins and He closes his reply to the Samaritan objection, by affirming the real insignificance of mere local considerations in religion, when viewed according to that spiritual dispensation He came to establish,

when He was to consummate the sacrifice and oblation in his own person, and thus supersede all necessity for that single peculiar habitation of the Divine presence and mercy-seat, of which the people of Judæa were now the exclusive occupants. For thus runs his discourse; "Believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, (in neither place, He means; with scrupulous exclusion of all others,) worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what:" you have lost the clear knowledge of the professed object of your worship, Jehovah the God of Israel, in forsaking that tabernacle and temple where He as truly fixed his habitation and his glory in the days of David and Solomon, as He had fixed it in Shiloh of Ephraim before; you have in this missed the only line of communication in which you can reach from Moses to that greater Prophet, whom he announced as hereafter to come to Israel; you approach God in a way of your own invention; and if you persist in that error, you will never find that greater Prophet, the Anointed of God, through whom alone the God and Father of all is correctly known, and spiritually worshipped. "We know what we worship:" for we, the Jews, can trace this line of human hope from Moses, through David and all the prophets, of whom you are ignorant: in them the light of revelation perceptibly increases; and is strengthened from its first dawning dimness, under the patriarchs you recognize, till in the pages of Isaiah and the rest are seen glimpses of a coming day—a day which is now fast ap-

proaching, and from that quarter which they point out, the Judaical royal line of David: "for salvation is of the Jews." Our Lord proceeds to demonstrate, that this is no vain rivalry of local or national interests, but the introduction of a new and better system, under which all such boasts and distinctions as these,—the true distinction of the Jew, as well as the false boast of the Samaritan,—should vanish, absorbed in that greater light, and be lost to view entirely. For thus He proceeds, "The time cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Such, then, was the mode and spirit in which the Saviour of mankind directed this singular people to the time when they should, equally with the genuine Israelites, worship the common Father in his name; when Ephraim, in the prophetic language, should no longer envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. We have now to consider what is the next remarkable feature of this case, the effect of the truth thus announced on the mind of this Samaritan and her countrymen, as compared with the ordinary success of our Lord with the better instructed Jews.

The Samaritan woman answers to this observation of our Lord; "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." A confession truly extraordinary, whether we consider the previous materials

of this conviction, or the occasion that now drew it forth. The occasion that drew forth this recognition of the great hope of mankind, was simply what had just been spoken concerning the approaching establishment of a spiritual religion and worship: her introduction, therefore, of the Messiah upon this, proves manifestly that it was a spiritual leader—a teacher of the true worship of God—that she expected under that name and character. How different this from the general expectation of the Jewish nation at this time concerning the Messiah—the expectation of a conquering hero and deliverer to their nation! And how remarkable does this difference appear when we compare the materials for their respective convictions! The Samaritans (for this woman was not singular in her correct belief,) had for their true expectation little more than the first promise to our fallen parents at the beginning of Genesis, that the woman's seed should break the seducing serpent's power, and the great promise to Abraham, of the future blessing of all nations in his promised descendant: for as to the blessing by Jacob of Judah, the next ancestor of the Prince of Peace, this great prophecy they lost altogether by sinking it in what they deemed the paramount blessing of Joseph. They had in the book of Genesis but those two great promises to the father of mankind, and the father of the faithful: to which was added, in the last book of the Pentateuch, a third of the greatest value, the prediction of Moses respecting the future greater Prophet and Lawgiver of Israel.

More than this the Pentateuch, their only Scriptures, can scarcely be said to supply them explicitly, on the subject of the coming Messiah. But the Jews for their expectation had all the strains of David and the prophets—prophecies which foretold, with singular precision and fulness, the future grandeur of Christ's kingdom and its dominion over the Gentiles, which they selfishly referred to their own triumph over the Gentiles under his leadership; while the equally distinct passages of the same prophecies that spoke of Christ's sufferings and death as the means of his spiritual conquest, they either blindly overlooked or wilfully misinterpreted. And Christ, who hid Himself from the instructed Scribes and Pharisees, and refused even the signs demanded of Him by persons who had so abused the light already afforded them,—He now, unsolicited, gives to the Samaritan stranger that information respecting Himself for which her sincerity of faith in the coming Messiah showed her so well prepared: He replied, "I that speak to thee am He." And the result of this announcement was, the conviction not only of this woman, but of many of her countrymen. Many, merely on the report that He thus proved his prophetic character to her, believed that He was the Christ: but they all besought Him to stay with them. It is not related that they asked for signs like the Pharisees; or even that He wrought any miracles among them. That no such were performed, may be fairly inferred from the tacit contrast which, immediately after leaving their borders, the Saviour made of their con-

duct and spirit with that of the Galileans his own countrymen, by whom He was comparatively unhonoured. "Except *ye* see signs and wonders," he says to these last, "ye will not believe." And not only from his speech addressed soon after to the nobleman of Capernaum may we infer the absence of miracles among these foreign hearers, but from the narration itself. It is said merely that many more believed *because of his word*; because of the divine instructions which he in his character of Prophet or divine teacher communicated to them: and they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have *heard* him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Their grounds were therefore not those overpowering proofs of his Divinity, which were yet unable to convince the stubborn Jews, on whom proofs of every kind were exhausted. All that was possessed by these good Samaritans, all that they appear to have sought, was the sober conviction with which his prophetic character inspired them; and on the strength of this they proclaim Him, not like the Jewish phantom of a Messiah—as a deliverer to themselves only,—but, in the true spirit of knowledge and charity united, as the Saviour of the whole world. And it is to be most particularly noted that this was not their final state, nor designed to be represented by the inspired historian as such. When the mysteries of human redemption were accomplished, and Christ was glorified, then we are told by St Luke in the book of Acts

how Samaria received the word of God, first by the preaching and baptism of Philip the Evangelist, and afterwards by the apostolic confirmation and imposition of hands. Thus, doubtless, were these men of Sychar in particular actually admitted into that kingdom for which their previous reception of its Lord had prepared them, and which He described as on the point of manifestation to the world,—the spiritual household of faith.

What then is our concern in the remarkable case we have considered, in that spiritual dispensation of religion now actually established; in which we of the Gentile world are, equally with believing Jews and Samaritans, co-heirs and partakers? The possession of the divine oracles is indeed an awfully momentous trust: but it is one which, in the divine counsel concerning us, is ever subordinated to a higher purpose, which is, that we may worship God in Spirit and in truth; that we may be united to that holy quire of saints whom the Father hath through his Son declared that he exclusively seeks to worship him. Our boast of mere possession is vain as that of the Jew,—it is nothing or worse than nothing,—if, with the majority of that nation in his day, we, in the language of St. Paul, detain the truth in unrighteousness: or if, as our Lord more awfully warns his chosen followers, our righteousness under the means of interior sanctification that we possess, do not far exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees in a circumscribed and local system of exclusive religion.

It is possible to experience a similar effect from the multitude of the illustrations which encompass religion at the present time, to that which the Jews felt from the prophecies and varied testimonies addressed to them. A trite familiarity, rather than a confirmed knowledge, may be the result; and that may consequently affect the mind in an inadequate or even a false manner, which, if apprehended for the first time by persons comparatively ignorant, but fair and simple-minded, would be embraced as the most valuable truth, and direct the heart and conduct entirely. It is possible, even when its claims and obligations are in some degree apprehended, to wish that light were less, to prefer living by those measures of morality, and that degree of interior light, which belongs equally to the better portion of the heathen world. But these wishes, wherever they are found, are vain, as well as corrupt and criminal: we cannot escape the consequences of that better illumination to which not the severity—but the mere grace and favour of God—has introduced us; to which, in the language of the Epistles, He has gratuitously elected and predestinated us: we cannot, without base ingratitude, wish to decline it: we cannot, without some dishonest infatuation of mind, even think this possible,—nor can we, without danger of Divine judgment, act internally as if it could be. A woe lies upon us,—if, with the sufficient credentials of Christ incarnate, crucified, and risen, we refuse to mark them,—if marking, we believe them not—if believing, we obey Him not. The same ministra-

tion of grace which, sincerely followed, produces in order the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and insures from the only Author of righteousness its proportional reward, the same neglected or abused,—either despised because common, or in any other way declined or resisted,—becomes in the same measure and proportion the ministration of condemnation: in which all those will rise up in judgment against us, and additionally condemn us, who have, like those Samaritans, acted on a lower and imperfect knowledge, and attained, through a light feeble and inconsiderable compared with ours, the grace that conducts to immortality.

Since, therefore, no other foundation can be laid than that which in the Gospel is laid for us, our sole concern for ourselves is that we be of the number of those whom in that better dispensation of things, the Father seeks—whom through his Word and only-begotten Son He enables—truly and spiritually to worship him. It is not for us to seek some supposed exclusive possession of Christ's mysteries of salvation; pretensions to which most frequently result from a partial narrow view of the scheme of the Gospel, and a setting up, in consequence, of one part of divine truth in opposition to, or in disparagement of, another. Our concern in this respect is simply with the great deposit of Catholic Faith which Christ has bequeathed; which, in all the plenitude of its saving application, is found in the Church of God; and which is the source of all the true holiness and pureness of living that has ever existed there. And when we see that Christ an-

nexed this deposit to a definite and visible constitution,—to the Apostles whom He ordained, and commanded to ordain others to succeed them, even to the end of the world,—and when we recognize in this an institution assuredly not less sacred and less awful than that which was entrusted to the Jews,—our consideration of its more spiritual nature should not diminish in the least, while it should essentially qualify and characterize, our zeal for its defence and conservation: it should lead us, while avoiding the deadly evil which appeared in the Jews' view of the matter, to retain and to cherish all that in them met with our Lord's preference and commendation. We have means of estimating the value of that sacred deposit which were not possessed in the same degree by our predecessors three centuries since: for we have seen the issues of the attempts to supersede, by novel schemes of ecclesiastical regimen, that one which has descended from the Apostles to us. Though erected in professed maintenance of orthodox doctrine, and often with the idea of supporting some favourite portions of it in a manner more spiritual and effective than the Church,—we find their invariable tendency to sink, after not many generations, to a state in which these, and all other Catholic doctrines on which Christian piety rests, are questioned or rejected: while in the most corrupt parts where the ancient succession remains, these fundamental truths of the Gospel, however weakened or impaired in effect, remain, at least in profession, still. We find the *Church* in its purified state approaching more

and more to the assumption of its proper character, as the pillar and ground of the truth,—the only sure asylum against the errors and disorders that distract the world. While therefore we contemplate with thankfulness the proofs thus afforded us that in the same sense in which salvation was of the Jews in our Lord's age, so is salvation still of his one Catholic and Apostolical Church,—while we rejoice and glory in having a sound branch of this Church with its sufficient credentials among ourselves,—yet on this point it becomes us ever to rejoice with trembling; to take heed, above all things, that our glorying on this behalf is of the right character, that it is built upon the word and promises of Christ our Lord, not on the mere echoes of his voice among men; that so it be not alloyed by secularity, nor corrupted and disgraced by uncharitableness. For in the very existence of divisions amongst us do we not see too clearly a penalty of the sins of God's Church, as well as a trial of its faithful members? and in the piety which we may recognize often in individuals, where the communities to which they belong want the essential characteristics of the Church, may we not observe an analogy to God's conduct to ancient Israel provoking them to jealousy by those that were *no people*,—instructing them thus not to any doubt of their own peculiar vocation, but to a more earnest and practical regard to it. To deport ourselves rightly and truly in our own higher relations, we need a better guidance than even the best of earthly principles can supply; better than regard to human authority, however respectable, or

than that attachment with which cultivated minds are ever induced to cling to what is ancient and venerable: we need a perpetual reference in our inmost hearts to that in which the essence of all acceptable religion consists,—the spiritual recognition of God our Father reconciled in Christ,—into whose mystical body, the Church, one living Spirit has engrafted us: to found on Him and on his word our conviction that the truths He has revealed and committed to our keeping, are the true life of the world,—and that they are then only secure from decaying and perishing when in that line to which his express commission has consigned them. Thus alone shall our course be right, when error and strife and mutual misapprehension are so generally the penalties of our sins and the sins of our forefathers. It is thus that we may truly hope to aid in building up the Church of the living God among ourselves; and thus may we escape the condemnation which the example of the honest Samaritans of Sychar will bring upon us, if our higher privileges, our correct tradition in religion, and knowledge of all God's Holy Scriptures, do not lead us to truth and to salvation.

SERMON XI.

THE SUDDEN COMING OF CHRIST.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the last Sunday of Advent, Dec. 19, 1841.¹)

MALACHI III. 1, 2.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in. Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?

THE signs and indications of Christ's coming into the world—first, in his humiliation to redeem mankind, and at last, in his glory to judge them,—are the objects which at this season Christians are called especially to remember. There might, at first sight, appear but little unity of subject in the ideas which the Church has thus blended together in one celebration: for what can be more powerfully contrasted in every mode and circumstance than these two Advents of our Lord? It might seem a mere arbitrary association of ideas by which, in the services of this season, we are so solemnly adjured, in consideration of his first coming to

¹ Preached in India, Dec. 20, 1835.

visit us in our frail mortality, to prepare for that second awful coming, when every work of darkness shall be brought into open day, and when they only who loved and followed Him in this life shall rise to the life immortal, and share the glories of his appearing.

But these ideas have more to connect them together than what pious association, founded on the circumstances of contrast, might dictate to any individual Christian. They are actually interwoven together in the very scheme of revelation: in thus commencing by ancient usage her ecclesiastical year, and preparing the glad festival of her Lord's nativity in this lower world, the Church is only following out the path which the Divine Spirit had opened in preparing the event itself. The great object of prophecy in the Old Testament is generally the coming of the promised Redeemer; as his second coming to the final separation of good and evil is the great prophetic announcement of the New. But while our circumstances, placed between the two Advents, enable us to distinguish what belongs severally to each, it is far different with those of old; whose revelations pointing to a future Deliverer, are yet no less written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come. In the ancient writings, especially commended to *our* use by the Apostles of Christ, the manifestation of Him who was to be the Restorer and the final Judge of men is presented most frequently as but one object: the various circumstances of obscurity and greatness, of humility and

majesty, are indeed there pointed out, but not under those precise relations of time and place in which our situation leads us separately to discern them. Seen through the vista of preceding ages, as the several dispensations of divine truth unfolded it with successive clearness to the prophetic vision, the scene of Christ's first Advent appeared invested with all the sublime circumstances which were to flow in necessary and inevitable consequence from it: thus it stood in conjunction with the triumphs of the Gospel, and the second Advent, to all by whom that last consummation of things was in any degree prophetically discerned: and while this, the final object of hope to the pious in all ages, formed the background of the prospect in which the future coming of the Messiah was depicted, He was thus exhibited to the expectant faithful at once as their Prophet and their final Redeemer from death,—their King, their Leader, and their Judge. And if we would know the place which we ourselves occupy in that great scheme of revelation, which awaits yet its final consummation,—if we would understand properly our own position in divine things, not only for the clear historical knowledge of what God has done, but with relation to what He will as surely perform in its time,—we must then recur to these prophetic Scriptures, which place the past in conjunction with the future, and include us in the scene between, which is surely and rapidly unfolding. Attending, as the apostle St. Peter directs, to this sure word of prophecy,—regarding in its description of things now

past, how they bear on the anticipation of the second Advent and the life everlasting,—we may then consider, in the language of the same apostle, what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, who are admitted to view so much of the economy of grace as completed, and to call ourselves after the name of Him who is the great Object and Agent of all.

To this particular purpose no part of Scripture can be more appropriate than that which is cited by our Lord himself in the Gospel of this day,—the prophecy of my text, which closes the canon of the Old Testament. And none more exemplifies the truth which I have been endeavouring to illustrate, that the prophets, in describing the then future coming of the Saviour, viewed it as invested with all the circumstances that are to follow it,—in which, as being its true and proper colouring, the Spirit of God painted it on their imaginations and hearts. That this prophecy refers to the first Advent, the very terms and our Lord's own application demonstrate: while the attributes of authority and judgment annexed to it lead our thoughts inevitably to the second. Let us then, first, endeavour to declare the scope and meaning of this prophecy; secondly, to declare how it was accomplished by our Lord's coming; and thirdly, point out its application to ourselves.

First, then, for the explanation of the prophecy itself. This oracle was not delivered, like those of the royal Psalmist, Isaiah, and others, in the flourishing days of the Jewish monarchy, when the pro-

phet, in images derived from the temporal kingdom of David, described the eternal glories of his Son, and through Him, after intermediate scenes of trial, the final triumph and felicity of his people. Neither is this prophecy like that of Jeremiah, which the Church before Advent pointed to our notice, a prediction of the restoration of that kingdom, when ruined and subverted, by the eternal Prince to come; and under the image of the Israelites' return from captivity, the gathering together of the faithful from all countries under the banner of the LORD their Righteousness. Neither is this, like the only other prophecies besides this that are subsequent to that return,—those of Haggai and Zechariah,—an encouragement to those who were rebuilding God's temple, by announcing the greater glory which that Branch of the house of David should bestow upon it; that amidst all the deficiencies of outward splendour in this house compared with that of Solomon,—the people of Israel yet dependent on strangers, the royalty of David's house yet unrestored,—still in this temple the Desire of all nations should appear, and give peace to Israel and the world. Our prophet indeed speaks of the same things, but in a manner remarkably different from theirs; intended, apparently, at the close of the Old Testament, to rebuke that fabric of false expectation which the corrupt Jews were founding on the preceding prophecies. Addressing the people, about a century after the rebuilding of the city, when past sufferings and God's restoring mercy were alike passing from their recollection, and a

general impiety and profligacy of manners was overspreading both priests and people, he reminds them forcibly and indignantly that the restoration of David's throne, and the consequent glory and blessing which they expected, would prove no restoration, and no blessing, to persons such as they were. The blessing was for the pious few who were exceptions from the general corruption; but to the mass of the nation the Messiah's coming would be a far different event—the coming of a terrible Judge, who was to separate the good from the evil, to consign those who were unprepared for his approach to signal and irremediable destruction¹. His coming, however, though sudden, is not to be unprepared; before him is to go the mystical Elias to turn the hearts of the people, ere the curse should strike the disobedient. In this chapter his coming is thus stated: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me:" and when he shall have discharged his office agreeably to these words (the words of the LORD of hosts), then the great object of all prophecy and all consequent expectation shall Himself appear. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple—the Messenger, or Angel of the covenant, whom ye delight in", whom you expect with earnestness. "Behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who," it is added, "shall abide the day of his coming? or shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire," to separate the dross from the pure gold and silver in the city and sanctuary of God:

¹ Mal. ii. 17—iii. 5.

he is, by clearing off all the corrupt and unworthy, to purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer to God a sacrifice in righteousness. Then when that fearful judgment is accomplished, when that swift witness against wickedness of every kind shall have accomplished his strict reformation, "then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant as in former years:" a pure offering shall take place of that which their selfishness and sacrilegious impiety had polluted; and from East to West the name of the LORD should be "great among the Gentiles." Then should those who in time past had remembered God, and supported themselves against prevailing unrighteousness, be remembered by him, and placed among his precious jewels; and a plain mark should for ever separate between him that served God, and him that served Him not¹.

Thus, then, the attribute of Judgment, which all preceding prophets had ascribed with more or less distinctness to the Christ, is the prominent character under which He is exhibited by this last of the Old Testament prophets. But before considering how that character is realized, the terms under which his person is described invite our attention. He is described under the two characters, apparently incompatible, of a lord and a messenger: he is at once the Lord of the temple, and that the temple of the living God, which He is to surprise by his unexpected visitation,—and He is the Messenger to the Israelites of the covenant that God made with their fathers. An union of two cha-

¹ Mal. i. 11; iii. 3—18.

racters—one which without blasphemy can be applied to none but God, and another which so indubitably points out its subject as a man,—might be as inexplicable to unbelief as the corresponding question, ‘How is the Lord of David, David’s son?’ proved to the Pharisees. But the Christian mystery of the Incarnation explains this and many other oracles of the ancient Scripture. The Divine Word made flesh, is termed by one of his own apostles, “the Apostle” or Messenger “of our profession”—the very term used by Malachi. For thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “The Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, was faithful to him that appointed him, even as also Moses was faithful in all his house: but this man was counted worthy of more honour than Moses, inasmuch as he that hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. Every house,” continues the inspired author, “is built by some one: but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which should come after; but Christ as a Son over his own house¹.” Thus, then, does the New Testament tell us what it is to be at the same time an Apostle or Messenger, and a Lord of the house,—a Lord as its Creator and builder: that the character of a messenger or servant in him was united to the character of Son; a name expressing the most entire identity of nature with the Father that employed him as man, setting him infinitely above all

¹ Heb. iii. 1—6.

other servants or messengers like Moses,—giving him the full right of a Son over his own house, which He visits and rules accordingly. And therefore it is that when this Eternal Son was incarnate as man on the earth, and pointing out John the Baptist as his forerunner, he quotes the beginning of the prophecy thus: “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before Thee.” He makes that an address of God the Father to his Son—which in the text of Malachi is the assertion of Jehovah the LORD of hosts concerning Himself. “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me...saith the LORD of hosts¹.” In thus citing this prophecy, as you have heard in St Matthew’s Gospel the Sunday preceding this, our Lord does but more distinctly declare that which the original text implies; viz. that He whose Advent is thus prepared is Himself the LORD of hosts to whom that temple was dedicated,—its true Lord by the title of a Son,—whose dominion and authority is everlasting.

But the second branch of the enquiry is now before us, which is, how was the prediction contained in my text, of the Christ, verified in the person of Jesus our Lord? how did he, as Lord of the temple, make his unexpected visitation? And how did that character of severe examination follow, which were to make it a means of purification to the good,—of judgment and excision to the wicked? How was that strictness of judgment

¹ Matt. xi. 10; Luke vii. 27.

displayed which few of the people could abide, and none without trembling for his security? These characters, together with the restoration to that fallen house of the pure and acceptable worship of former years, and the introduction from that place of a worship which should magnify the name of God among the Gentiles, from the rising to the setting sun, are all assigned in this prophecy to the Advent of the future Messiah,—of Him whose coming was to be announced by the preceding messenger John the Baptist, expressly pointed out as such by our Lord in the Gospel.

Some difficulty may possibly occur in applying these terms of awful judgment, as we are required, to the first lowly appearing of Jesus of Nazareth; of Him who came into the world, not, as he then declared, to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Yet it deserves our most particular notice, that not Malachi only, but the immediate forerunner predicted by him,—the mystical Elias or John the Baptist,—announced his Lord's coming when close at hand in terms exactly corresponding. "His fan is in his hand," says the Baptist, "and he shall thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he shall burn with fire unquenchable." He tells the Jews, in the view of this awful discrimination and judgment closely impending, to repent and bring forth fruits worthy of repentance: since "now," even now, he declares, "the axe is laid to the root of the trees: every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn

down, and cast into the fire.” And correspondent in some measure to these declarations of the forerunner are those of the Saviour himself to Nicodemus: “He that believeth not is condemned *already*,” and still more in those addressed to the restored blind man: “For judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see”—they who with better light and conviction, yet refuse to open their minds to it—“might become blind.” He was to be, as Isaiah foretold, and his apostles applied the prophecy, not only “the sure foundation stone laid in Sion” for the chosen people of God, but a “stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to those who stumbled at the word, being disobedient:” who by the very means which should have worked to their salvation, had they accepted them as the Saviour wished, led only to more aggravated condemnation, and a judicial separation from the righteous even in the present life which could not have been otherwise effected. It is not therefore by referring the prophet’s words to the second Advent only or nakedly, that we consult the truth of his prediction; for the first Advent so plainly indicated by the forerunner, by the temple yet standing, and the Gentile worship which should follow,—this Advent will be sufficient for our purpose, if we take it in conjunction with its effects; effects almost immediate in operation, but visible and striking to the attentive beholder; continuous in the example they afford, and stretching in their final development to the end of the world.

Let us enquire then into the particulars of this statement. The Lord, in the first place, was to come *suddenly* to his temple. The attribute of strange unforeseen appearance was one which the Jews themselves accordingly expected in the Messiah. "When Christ cometh," they tell our Saviour, "no man knoweth whence he is¹:" and such continued to be the idea of their equally faithless descendants after their great dispersion². But this sudden appearance of the Lord in his temple was accomplished in a way they little expected. His first solemn presentation in that holy place was not without some expressive indications of this truth: when He whom Gentile sages had come from afar to worship with offerings at Bethlehem, received not the due homage of his own house. He came unnoticed as Lord, except by the private hymn of Simeon declaring Him "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel;" a glory however not to be theirs, as that holy man declared, without opposition and contradiction from his kindred and people,—not without severe trial of the hearts and thoughts of men,—and the falling away, as well as the rising, of many in Israel.

But we must look for our Lord's predicted *visitation* of his temple to a period thirty years

¹ John vii. 27.

² Thus, in Justin Martyr's dialogue with Trypho the Jew,—the Jew says; Χριστος δε, εἰ καὶ γεγενῆται, καὶ ἐστὶ πον, ἀγνωστός ἐστι, καὶ οὐδε αὐτός πω ἑαυτὸν ἐπίσταται, οὐδὲ ἔχει δυνάμιν τινα, μέχρις ἂν ἔλθων Ἠλίας χρίσῃ αὐτὸν, καὶ φανερὸν πάσι ποιήσῃ.—"Even if Christ is already born, he is unknown; neither does he know himself (to be Christ), nor has he any power, until Elias come and anoint him, and make him manifest to all."

subsequent to that first presentation; when the forerunner had already prepared Him, when at John's baptism He had been proclaimed the Son of God from heaven,—but when neither the testimony of John, nor the greater testimony of Him that sent him, was heeded by the priests and rulers of Jerusalem. The most striking visitation was that five days before his passion, when entering the sacred precincts amidst the Hosannas of the assembled multitude, proclaiming Him that Lord of the temple and of its sacrifice which the 118th Psalm they quoted expresses throughout, he vindicated by superhuman power his dominion over that house, and its inviolable sanctity, by forcibly expelling the traffickers who polluted it,—declaring at the same time, in words taken from the prophets, to his astonished and exasperated enemies, that this his Father's house which they had desecrated, was his own house also. The circumstances of that most remarkable scene, and of the Lord's daily teaching in that place till the hour of darkness arrived, answer strictly to the description of the present prophecy:—the Lord of the temple coming, though not unannounced, yet unexpected and unprepared for, by those most concerned to receive him,—and assuming his prerogative of cleansing that house among persons confounded and alarmed at his appearing. But the judgment itself, of which this act of our Lord was but the expressive symbol, was to follow,—and it closely followed,—his passion and resurrection at Jerusalem.

The judgment finally announced by Him in that

sacred place¹ as about to burst upon them that rejected Him, was from that hour unfolding itself: it received a solemn seal on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit who should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, converted those who were convertible from even that dark abyss of guilt; and in so doing, set the mark of unpardonable sin on those who in despite of that Divine power continued obdurate and unbelieving. The subsequent conduct of those two classes showed in indelible characters that separation of good and evil which Christ in his new dispensation of the Spirit effected, and the judgment closely following, almost by natural consequence. The one class, hurried by their restless passions, and the expectation of a Christ of their own to gratify them, into a final defiance of the greatest earthly power, and the endurance, in consequence, of horrors to which the history of the world has no parallel: the others, forewarned by their Lord, escape to the mountains from the abomination of desolation about to be set up in the temple, and the fire and sword which should destroy the murderers of their King and Saviour. The prophet's exclamation, "Who may abide that sudden and strange appearing?" will receive a sad illustration, if in those days of tribulation which even just before his passion our Saviour beheld with such painful anticipation, we compare that small number of the elect and saved, with those whom their insane folly hurried to destruction; when by this light we

¹ John xii. 30—33.

look at the sad doom of the ancient temple and sanctuary of God,—its altars, sacrifices, and priesthood, for ever abolished, and a new race of kings and priests to God, collected to offer to the Most High sacrifices in righteousness.

The circumstances, therefore, of the Jewish people in their sufferings at that time, and their hopeless dispersion in shame and contempt ever since, furnish us, when compared with their previous condition, with one most striking and instructive comment on the truth of the prophecy we are now considering. Our Lord himself, in many of his discourses, instructs us so to regard these events; and mingling them as he does with the annunciation of the general judgment, he instructs us to consider these events as the sign and exemplar of his second Advent. They were the light by which the first Christians his followers were to read the certainty of that coming judgment, and to be warned to think of and to prepare for it. Can then the circumstances of what is thus announced and presented to the Church be without interest or application to us? The message of the Gospel remaining in substance ever the same, the dispensation of the Spirit which is to apply and enforce it subsisting, as our Lord declared, with its authoritative ministries, even to the end of the world,—is it a subject of no moment to mark the judgment which followed so closely his own personal appearance, and to enquire how far our own character unites us to those who received, or to those who rejected Him?

On the issue of this question depends our own fitness to meet his second Advent in that character which we recognize in our Morning Hymn, "We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge." And considering that the message of his truth, if it has not influenced our lives, nor affected the principles of our conduct and speculation in the world, must leave us under the worse condemnation of having rejected it, how seriously should we learn to apply the question before us, not to the case of others, but to our own; "Who may abide the day of his coming, or who shall stand when he appeareth?"

And while this consideration is the strongest of all motives to that preparation of self-enquiry and self-judgment which the subject and the season suggest to us, we have the consolatory assurance to animate our efforts, that that self-judgment extended to the whole of our conduct, conducing to amendment of life and purification of the heart, will disarm the final judgment, and prepare us to meet our Lord with joy at his second coming. "If we would judge ourselves," says the apostle, "we should not be judged: but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The sighing of the contrite heart, and the desires of them who are sorrowful for sin, will not escape the notice of our Father in heaven, who sent his Son clothed in human nature to redeem us, and his Holy Spirit to sanctify us. He who cherishes these feelings of penitence and struggles for amend-

ment, nor seeks to drown them either in business or in pleasure, but, amidst the varied concerns of human life, directs his serious anxious thought to that day which the impure and the unrighteous cannot abide, he may find the same refiner's fire which will consume the ungodly of the earth like dross, employed in cleansing his corruptions from him, and fitting him by a purification, perhaps painful in its process, for that holiness and righteousness in which his soul may be well pleasing to God. Thus through Him who endured the cross for us is the faithful separated from sin; thus is his service and self-sacrifice, in life and in death made acceptable to his LORD and Redeemer.

But whatever be the issue of these considerations on our personal conduct, yet one thing is certain, that the end of all is at hand. At what time or season the consummation of the present state of things shall take place in the earth, is concealed from our knowledge; but the hour of death, always uncertain and never distant, brings it close to every individual. Whatever be the objects on which the hopes of men may be placed, to the exclusion of what religion presents, the course of years is silently yet certainly displacing them: every term of years in prospect, if it bear us not onward in that course in which the occupations, the cares, and sufferings of this life are purifying and fitting us for its blissful termination, is only carrying us on in an opposite direction,—placing us in a more melancholy and cheerless and hopeless condition respecting it. Since

then all may be said to depend upon the present direction of our hearts and thoughts on this subject, infinitely does it concern us to rectify them; to receive now by true faith and hearty obedience the Lord Christ as our own, through the appointed channels of grace; to become, by his inhabitation, living temples of the Most High, and capacitated, by the discipline and preparation of life, to meet Him joyfully at his second coming. The day of grace is fast closing, and that irreversible state advances, as announced at the close of the last book of the New Testament, when Christ shall again come with reward and judgment in his hand,—when he who is unjust shall be unjust still, and he who is filthy shall be filthy still, and he who is righteous and holy shall be righteous and holy still. And we are no further Christians than as our use of the means of grace, and the habitual direction of our thoughts and purposes, enable us to respond to this announcement in the words which conclude the volume of Revelation: “Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus.”

SERMON XII.

THE GAINSAYING OF CORE.

(Preached at St Mary's on Sunday, May 29, 1842, the Restoration of King Charles II).

ST JUDE, Ver. 11.

— *They have perished in the gainsaying of Core.*

IT is no common event by which the present anniversary is distinguished; and—though inferior in authoritative sanction to those catholic solemnities which mark the periods of our redemption by Christ Jesus, and those in which we glorify his grace as displayed in his more eminent Saints and Martyrs,—is yet commended as a national festivity to our observance; an observance assuredly not superseded, but rather heightened in its religious associations to us all, by occurring, as it does this year, on the weekly feast of the resurrection of the Lord of life from the grave. Well in particular does it become our academical institutions, in carrying out the bequests of ancient piety and charity for the light and guidance of after generations, to maintain, as we see, by conspicuous tokens, the solemn remembrance of this day's mercy: when our constitution, ecclesiastical and civil, arose, as it were, from a temporary death, inflicted by the

sacrilegious hands of its own infatuated members. To rejoice in the restoration of our Church and State from extinction, is due alike to those who preceded and those who are to follow us: and in order that we rejoice with reason, it becomes us to be sure that we rejoice in the Lord; that our trust is in Him who gave, who rescued, and who secures all to us,—that our celebration is not a matter of party or of policy, but of religion.

In this therefore, christian brethren, lies our principal concern in this anniversary. The Providence of God has in every age been the disposer of all power and all events on this earth: but since Christ rose from the dead, and the kingdoms of the world have been given into his hands by the Father, the concerns of his Church and religion have ever had a most direct and manifest bearing on the destinies of states and empires. Such was markedly the case, both in the evil and in the good that now invites our attentive review. It was from certain religious notions, such as they were, the consequence of revulsion from older error or corruption—a penalty which the sins of the fathers entailed on the children,—that we trace the conduct of the unhappy men by whom our monarchy was overthrown: Christ and his Gospel were in their mouths, when Episcopacy and Liturgy were put down, replaced first by tyrannical synods of pretended divine right, and then by a Babel of all sects and denominations; and when, in mere furtherance of these religious schemes, in which they persuaded themselves they were doing God

service, they caused one estate of the realm to usurp the power and authority of the whole, imbrued their hands in the blood of the Lord's anointed, and by their lawless usurpations paved the way for a military despotism. And if we are glad at the overthrow of the strange medley of fanaticism and tyranny which the crimes of these men introduced, be assured that our triumph avails little, if our zeal for God's cause be not deeper and stronger, as well as truer in direction, than theirs; if our religion be not as really concerned in the restoring as theirs in the destroying. There is not in the aspect of this case a more melancholy and indeed awful one than this,—that so large a proportion of our nation from that time to the present have habitually identified seriousness in religion with the rebellious side of this quarrel: and, in consequence, are inclined to treat as extravagances or excesses what, if there be any truth of God with us, can be no excess of religion, but a gross and detestable perversion of it. The worst fruit of this mode of thought, that which connected loose living and emancipation from strict religion with opposition to Puritan fanaticism, appears but too visibly in the personal life of the restored Monarch: and the reflections on this, and on the further divine judgments that befel his house, are often allowed an undue place in our thoughts when considering the great public mercy of this day,—the restoration of the crown of legitimate sovereignty to the dismembered commonwealth. But amidst all the confusions of senti-

ment which our past and present sins have introduced among us,—the truth of God remains unchanged and unchangeable. And it is good to recur from the tides of political strife, and the false position in which our Church was placed in a subsequent portion of these struggles, to the great principles laid down in Holy Scripture, and embodied in the life and practice of God's true saints in every age of the world.

For this purpose, the sixteenth chapter of the book of Numbers—the most detailed history in all Scripture of what was both an ecclesiastical and civil rebellion—is appointed as one of this day's morning lessons. That history is appealed to, and its instruction thus explicitly transferred from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation, in the clause I have just read from what is also among the lessons of the day, the short but striking epistle of St Jude. And without entering into the questions who were the particular persons, or heretical communities, whom the Apostle there describes as filthy dreamers, revilers of dignities; and again, whether it is a purely spiritual destruction, which in the text he describes as overtaking them, or the sword of Adrian and the Romans who destroyed the false Messiah and his adherents,—his words will well admit the most large and general explication. Those who in any manner abuse the mysteries of redeeming love whereby they are enlarged to the glorious liberty of the sons of God, by making them a pretext for trampling on the obligations which divine and human society throws around them—are well

warned by the example of those who thus conducted themselves after Israel's redemption from the bondage of Egypt. And the eternal destruction awaiting this and every other lawless course of action, unrepented, is, as the words express, a doom that has already proceeded against such persons: as surely as it was with Korah and his company, those "sinners against their own souls," while they stood yet unscathed before Moses and Aaron in the congregation.

Let us then consider in order the main features of the narrative to which the Apostle here alludes, and which is unfolded in the fourth book of the Pentateuch; the factious design entertained jointly and severally by Korah and his associates, Dathan and Abiram,—the pretences by which they sought to justify their conduct,—and the righteous judgment of God which was its consequence. We may then proceed to consider the manner in which this example speaks to us under the new dispensation of the Spirit in the Gospel: imploring first, and above all, the same Spirit, who indited this and every other example of the Ancient Scripture, to dispose the preacher's mind to apprehend aright, and all hearts to meditate and to profit by it.

First, therefore, for the factious design. This rebellion of Korah and his associates was the only systematic attempt to set aside the constituted authority through which God was conducting his redeemed people to the promised land of Canaan. The querulous impatience of the people is indeed conspicuous throughout this memorable history; the

carnal spirit which caused them to lose the sense of the intolerable slavery they had escaped in the reflection on their plenteous fare in Egypt, as contrasted with the manna of the desert; to forget the mercy with which God had looked on their affliction, and the mighty hand and stretched-out arm with which he led them forth with their armies; and thus ungratefully to disregard their present mercies also,—the bread of heaven that fed them, and the paternal rule that guided them. But here we have not only a murmuring against the divinely appointed government, but a distinctly planned endeavour to subvert it, and substitute another in its place. And since that government consisted of two parts,—the civil authority in the person of Moses, who in every other respect but that of hereditary transmission held the place of king in Jeshurun, as he is termed¹, and the sacerdotal dignity vested in Aaron and his descendants,—these formed the two great objects of attack in the several divisions of the conspiracy; the latter the object specially aimed at by Korah and his company, the former by his associates Dathan and Abiram.

Now if we enquire who these persons were, we shall have little difficulty in penetrating their motives and objects in this proceeding: and the enquiry is in many points most highly instructive to us. Korah was a chief man in the sacred tribe of Levi; and of the same division of the tribe from which Aaron and Moses sprang, the family of Kohath: his father being the brother of Amram, whose

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 5.

exposure of his second son, the future lawgiver of Israel, is told in the second chapter of Exodus. The tribe of Levi had been solemnly separated from all the tribes of Israel to minister in holy things to the rest of the people, and to do the service of the sanctuary of the LORD;—for which purpose it was to have no lot or inheritance of its own in the promised land, but to be supported on the tithes and offerings furnished by the rest of Israel; in the midst of whom they were to be dispersed, not for their own benefit, but the common benefit of all. But out of this sacred tribe one peculiarly sacred family was to be selected for the offices of the priesthood—*i. e.* for the offering of sacrifices, for pronouncing blessings, and standing between God and the people as intercessors: and here the lawgiver of Israel did not point out his own house as the object of the divine choice, but that of Aaron, his elder brother, whose prerogative this should remain for ever. Here, then, we mark the envious disposition of Korah, in contrast with the disinterestedness of Moses: he could not brook that himself and his descendants should be excluded for ever from the sacerdotal dignity: and while this was denied, to use the words of Moses' expostulation to him, it seemed a small thing to him that the Lord God had separated him from the congregation of Israel, to bring him near to Himself, together with all his brethren of the sons of Levi: nay, that his own particular family of Kohath should be distinguished above all other Levites next to Aaron's house, by being employed to carry the Ark and the Holy of Holies:

all this seemed as nothing to him, unless that which God had denied were granted to him and his,—the privilege of entering the most sacred precincts, and exercising the priesthood¹. This, then, was the grievance of Korah; and to gratify the selfish pride that led him to seek its removal, he was ready, like other envious and discontented spirits, to league himself with those who were hostile to what he himself possessed; to give up the peculiar privilege and duty of his own tribe of Levi, by raising or encouraging the outcry, that all the people were possessed of official holiness alike, and all were equally qualified to serve before God in the tabernacle and the congregation.

The grievance of the other conspirators, Dathan and Abiram and On, must have been of a somewhat different complexion from this, as we find them not among those who sought to offer incense and sacrifice: but the moral spirit that animated them all was essentially the same. These men were leaders of the tribe of Reuben, who was the firstborn son of Israel, to whom therefore naturally the right of primogeniture and the chief place among his brethren should have belonged,—but who had forfeited that pre-eminence in the lifetime of his father Jacob, by a most licentious and disgraceful violation of filial respect and duty. This was well known to the whole of the tribes: the final blessing of their father Jacob pronounced in Egypt on all his twelve sons, the patriarchs of Israel, left none of them in doubt as to the exist-

¹ Num. xvi. 8—11, coll. iv. 4—20 and vii. 7—9.

ence of this exclusion, or the grounds of it. None were uninformed as to the transference of the right of the firstborn with its double portion to the tribe of *Joseph*,—of him who was once separated from his brethren, and now found himself doubly represented in the congregation by the hosts of Ephraim and Manasseh: or as to the promise of future royalty, and the right of dominion over both Israelites and Gentiles, in the older tribe of *Judah*,—whence David, with his Son, the Christ of God, was hereafter to proceed. All this was no recent sentence: it had been fixed by sacred and authoritative declarations¹ long before the ministry of Moses began. And when that meek servant of God assumed by divine authority that conduct of the people that he sustained with such matchless ability and wisdom, he assuredly had no wish to annul these divine declarations, or to transfer to any tribe beside those of Joseph and Judah, and least of all to his own sacred tribe of Levi, the civil rights which Reuben had lost: all that God's counsel had declared was preserved entire in his faithful keeping: he reserved no privilege or distinction of any kind to his own lineal descendants. The immediate succession to himself in the political government was destined to Joshua, of the eminent tribe of Ephraim: while his prophetic intimation of the future reserved to Judah that royalty over the house of Jacob, which God had declared to be hereafter the irreversible portion of that tribe. Why then, it should appear, was the wrath of these Reubenite chiefs to

¹ Gen. xlix. 3, 4, 8—12, 22—26, coll. 1 Chron. v. 1, 2, &c. &c.

be directed against *Moses*,—whatever may have been their cherished feeling of sullen indignation at not possessing that leading place among the tribes, which, as sons of the eldest, they would wish to enjoy? The answer is to be found in that spirit of blind envy which ever accompanies the turbulence of disappointed ambition: they saw in Moses only the present possessor of that sovereign power in the state which they would wish to see vested in themselves: and the knowledge that he only kept this power in trust for others, their esteemed rivals, during Israel's march across the wilderness, would perhaps only irritate them the more in proportion to his known disinterestedness. They would be led by this to set every engine to work to counteract in the people's minds an influence which, if universally revered and followed, was fatal to all their hopes of family aggrandisement. To this end, therefore, they would willingly join themselves to the discontent of Korah, and his leading family in the tribe of Levi: a powerful array of ecclesiastical as well as civil disaffection might thus be brought to bear against the present leaders of the people, sufficient, it was hoped, to work their overthrow, and thus bring themselves nearer to the object of their ambitious wishes.

Such, as may be most probably inferred, were the *motives*—the real *objects*—of these several factious leaders,—of Korah and his Levitical company on the one side, and of Dathan and his Reubenites on the other; objects which it might have been very difficult for them to adjust, had they succeeded

in their rebellion, and which probably they never attempted to adjust by express compact with each other when united in the destructive part of their scheme. So far, they were content with that bond which is often sufficient to hold the most unnatural coalitions of this kind together,—a common hatred to the present order of things under which God had placed them. And then their selfish purposes, which were scarcely fully communicated by either to the other, were still less brought out before the congregation of Israel, whom they wished to influence. Had it been given out that the object was to set Korah and his house in the place of Aaron and his house,—or to reinstate the heads of Reuben's tribe in all the privileges of primogeniture,—their project would have excited either active opposition or silent scorn throughout the camp of Israel: a far different course must be pursued, in order to gain partisans to their enterprise. Were the inward principle that actuates all turbulent and factious men brought out in their professions before the world, but half as distinctly as it is evinced to careful eyes in their practice,—a principle that seeks to efface all line of demarcation above them, while it would draw the exclusive line as strong as possible below them,—never could any such men become leaders of others. But something more generous than this is always professed by such, in order to sway the multitude: all that unites them against their common superiors is set in the most plausible shape of public spirit and regard to general good; while all in which they

are secretly opposed to each other is as studiously kept out of sight. Let us mark how it was in this respect with the great conspiracy which the Scripture has here recorded for our instruction.

The pretences on which this rebellious proceeding was justified by its abettors, we find to be two, closely corresponding to the civil and the ecclesiastical discontents from which it originated: and these pretences are extended in such a manner, as plausibly to take in every tribe and every man in Israel. These are, 1st, The alleged injury done to the common rights of all, by the assumption of the sovereign power by Moses,—as Dathan and Abiram urged to him; “Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness—except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?” And 2dly, The alleged usurpation on the common spiritual rights of all, by the restriction of the priesthood to the house of Aaron: as was the complaint of Korah to the high priest and the legislator; “Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, *every one of them*, and the LORD is among them: wherefore lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?” Thus, then, the assertion of equal rights in matters both civil and religious, is made the pretence of this insurrection: and how specious and imposing the pretext was, we may judge from the fact in this history, that it was joined by two hundred and fifty princes or leading men of the congregation, men of renown; besides a much larger

number of the common people, extending far beyond those who perished in the rebellion. Of the extent to which their representations had worked upon the people at large, we have indeed a wonderful proof at the close of this chapter: when we hear, that on the morrow after the signal overthrow of those conspirators, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, “Ye have killed the *people of the LORD*:” thus erecting those persons into Saints and Martyrs, whom heaven and earth had just declared to be conspicuous objects of divine vengeance. So alluring and captivating was that suggestion,—“The congregation is *all* holy,”—that it needed more than the fire and the earthquake that devoured the rebels,—it needed a fresh plague from the Almighty among the people at large, that only Aaron’s expiation could stay,—to check the progress of the delusion among the congregation of Israel. Nor is this so very wonderful, when the plausible as well as the flattering notion of the pretence is considered. The whole nation of the Hebrews had been solemnly declared “a kingdom of priests” to the LORD: they were sanctified from the nations around to be a peculiar people to Himself: and all, in the offering of praise, the sacrifices of their lips which they were continually to offer, as well as in the pious purity and obedience of their lives, were bound, as a holy priesthood, to honour and to glorify the God that had marked them for his own. The fallacy lay only in the conclusion which the presumption of man drew from this: that there

was therefore no need of express ministration, and consequently of relative official sanctity in some, to maintain that character in the people at large; or that the divine *offices* only were prescribed, but not the *minister*; that each man might burn incense and offer sacrifice for himself. How easily this pretence of abused religion would ally itself to political discontent, it is easy to imagine: for if all were thus equal in relative sanctity, how useless, how burdensome, were the revenues set aside for the priests' maintenance; how absurd the high priest's elevation above all the rest! How easy to proceed thence to the corrupt policy on which Jeroboam acted, he who made Israel to sin, when, to lead the ten tribes from the stated worship at Jerusalem, he offered sacrifice himself, or set up the lowest of the people as priests at less expense to officiate on self-constituted altars! How easy then to utter the complaint which he only who betrayed his Master originated under the gospel: "To what purpose all this waste?" when nothing more is sought than to show forth, in a manner decently proportional to the private and public means of the worshippers, the praise and glory of Him to whom all our gratitude and all our service is due; by means of whom alone we can be either grateful or loyal or useful to each other.

But our view of this extraordinary rebellion is not complete—unless, with the objects and the pretences, we view also the issues of it. As the majesty of heaven had been insulted by those who claimed to be its equal representatives with the

ministers of God's appointment, and the earth had been disturbed by those who rose against the divinely ordained instruments for maintaining order there,—it has been well observed that heaven and earth were visibly concerned in the vengeance taken respectively on these conspirators. Korah, and those with him, who claimed equally with Aaron the prerogatives of priesthood, are challenged by Moses to attend and confront him before the door of the tabernacle, with censers in their hands, that it may be known whom the Lord God of Israel will acknowledge as His priests or special ministers: the challenge is accepted with impious confidence by these infatuated men, and the glory of the LORD shone around both parties there present. Then Moses, leaving the door of the tabernacle, where these parties stood in the centre of the congregation of Israel, went, with the elders following him, to the tents of the determined rebels, Dathan and Abiram: who, when all the congregation were desired to separate from them, drew around them, in defiance of the threat, their families, as sharers in their cause, to stand or fall with them. And then, after a word which gave warning of the threatened vengeance, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and Abiram, with all their families; while, at the same instant, a fire came from heaven, and consumed Korah and the two hundred and fifty men with him who offered incense at the door of the tabernacle. Such is the vengeance recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Numbers: and it is not without

interest to mark one exemption that attended it, as it is one not immediately apparent in this chapter. The children of *Korah* did not perish in this destruction: so we are expressly told in a following¹ chapter; and so we may trace here: they were separated from him when he went to offer incense as a priest before the door of the tabernacle; and as they did not certainly leave their own tents as Levites to gather round those of Dathan and Abiram, when the congregation of Israel were commanded to separate from them, so they perished not, as did the children of those Reubenite chiefs, in the earthquake. They partook not, as we may well imagine, of their father's impious rebellion: and most memorable to them in particular must have been the lesson which the destruction of him and his companions by fire afforded, and of which their censers, as the Scripture says, remained a standing memorial in Israel: "that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense unto the Lord, that he be not as Korah and as his company: as the Lord spake to him by the hand of Moses." And that they long profited by the lesson which they are so expressly stated to have survived, we are not left without pleasing indications. Among the companies of Levites whose genealogies the book of Chronicles contains, explicit mention is made of the sons of Korah; and to these, in their courses of service in the sanctuary, are many of the Psalms of David committed for performance in the temple, as we

¹ Num. xxvi. 11.

may read in the titles of all from the forty-second to the forty-ninth inclusive. Thus, even the name which stands in the pages of Moses and St. Jude as an example of presumptuous iniquity, is not without its better association in the pages of Scripture, with the mercy that remits to the penitent the sins of their forefathers as well as their own, and with the victories of the Incarnate Son of God¹.

Having thus far pursued our consideration of this case in itself, let us now direct our regard to the manner in which this example speaks to us under the Gospel; how Korah, Dathan, and Abiram do indeed, as St. Jude intimates, speak a distinct and definite warning to Christians.

Undoubtedly we differ from the state of Israel in not having a visible government of extraordinary power upon earth, an express image of that government of the invisible God on whom our whole being, our body, soul, and spirit, depends for its being and its happiness. We have also no Aaronic priesthood: for our Great High Priest after the earlier order of Melchisedec,—He who is without beginning of days and end of life,—has at the same time consummated and superseded all the sacrifices of the old Law, by his one great oblation of Himself on the cross: which priesthood He continues in heaven by his intercession at God's right hand, and maintains on earth by the never-ceasing exhibition of his ordinances, his word and his sacraments. Such is the difference of our condi-

¹ Ps. xlvii., xlviii., lxxxiv., lxxxv., coll. 1 Chron. ix. 19, xxvi. 1.

tion; but greatly indeed should we offend against the direct instruction—as well as the analogies—of Scripture, were we hence to conclude that these examples affect us not even in matters of our duty in the world: that God's judgment is silent against disregard of those dignities mentioned by St. Jude¹, which He hath himself instituted, though not so immediately hallowed, as that of Moses; or that the usurpation of sacred ministries under the Gospel is not marked by his omniscient judgment, as well as their assumption under the law.

And first, for civil government. The offices of temporal rule, so necessary for man's well-being in the world, are not determined in the same manner by divine prescript, as those which relate to spiritual service before God, in matters known only from extraordinary revelation; and accordingly, though monarchical government is that into which the natural rule of parents and heads of families most properly evolved itself in the progress of the patriarchal age, and which has the most of revealed precedents in its favour, we do not pretend to challenge for it as such an exclusively divine right. Assuredly the government under which God's providence has placed any man's lot in the world, by which, however imperfect it may be, he has been protected from violence and rapine, and all the evils connected with them—whose benefits he partook in a thousand ways before he could choose and act for himself—this government is God's ordinance to him, which he is bound, not more

¹ Verse 8.

for wrath than for conscience' sake, to obey and revere as God's institution. As this constitution is not one which men can make or wholly remodel at pleasure, (the imagination that they can do so is among the most pernicious with which men's minds are now apt to be infected), so neither is it one whose bands of obligation can be ever with impunity violated; which bands have grown with the growth of each people, and whose healthy vigour constitutes their civil order and peace. Whatever share of power over others this constitution devolves on any one, is to be conscientiously exercised by him, as a trust from God the Supreme Ruler on their account: and every subjection in which he is placed to others is to be regarded with equal conscientiousness, as due from him to them on behalf of God: to whom the responsibility of the highest powers is proportionally great,—their praise the greater if the authority be well exercised, their guilt and doom the more terrible if it be abused. This is what every man is concerned to bear in mind in all his relations with political authority, agreeably to the sure precept of Holy Writ. St. Peter and St. Paul declare this to Christ's flock, no less than did Moses to Dathan and Abiram. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whoso resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

And to pass from this to the ecclesiastical consideration, to which the gainsaying of Core here mentioned by Christ's Apostle properly belongs. It

is too true, that there are those who maintain the peculiar offence he committed to be one which has no possibility of existence in the Christian dispensation; that now, in fact, the whole congregation of the Lord is, in Korah's sense, equally holy; and that since the Levitical priesthood has been abolished, Jesus Christ, our Priest for ever, has left no appointed channel of ministration for dispensing the fruits of his mediation to man. I would not now speak to those communities in protestant Europe which have been founded, either on a determined admission of this utterly novel principle, or on a necessity, (real or supposed) of acting at first as if it were true, afterwards disposing the great majority of their members to a ready acquiescence in it: neither is this the place for entering on that detailed refutation which it admits and has received. But to those who, like ourselves, have been, by God's mercy, nurtured in the old light of Christianity on this matter, I would state here how little reason we have to be moved from our steadfastness, as the Apostle speaks, by any representation of this sort, and the great peril that we should thereby incur. Certainly all argument drawn from the declarations of St. John and St. Peter, that Christians are made kings and priests to God,—that they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a *κλήρος* or peculiar possession, and the like,—all this might just as well have been urged under the old dispensation by Korah and his company: since the selfsame expressions—as God's peculiar lot, and “a kingdom of priests,”—are found employed even by Moses (though

with far less eminency of signification) to denote God's ancient people universally¹. And will not then the same answer apply equally to both? Certainly whoever perceives—as who must not perceive?—that all the personal sanctity of Christians whereby they offer up each individually acceptable sacrifice to the God of spirits, consists wholly in union with Christ their risen Head, and that this union can be maintained only by such means as Christ himself has appointed, must see that there is no contradiction—there can be none—between the end and the means here. Now that sacramental and other means are instituted for this end, there can be no question; and as little, that to perpetuate the dispensation of these means of grace, the Apostles whom Christ had commissioned even to the end of the world, ordained two several orders under themselves; and that none were admitted to these degrees of dispensation but such as were ordained either by the Apostles themselves, or by those on whom the Apostles had conferred the special right of ordaining. How this was understood in the primitive Church, and universally throughout Christendom, is matter not of speculation, but of fact: it is a great fact, whether we choose to attach weight to it or not, that every Bishop of the Church Catholic is as truly a descendant of Christ's Apostles by the spiritual progeniture of consecration to that office, as Eli and Ezra and Caiaphas were descendants of Aaron by natural generation. The proofs are as notorious, as incapable of being counterfeited,

¹ Exod. xix. 5, 6, &c. coll. 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9, v. 3. Rev. i. 5, 6.

in the spiritual succession as in the carnal one : nor is there any case of possible flaw, such as some persons please themselves in imagining, in the one descent, that might not be paralleled with suspicions just as probable of illegitimacy in the other. And assuredly, if personal unworthiness even to a high degree did not remove the obligation of recognizing the one descent, even in the worst days of Israel, (as we learn from certain proofs of Holy Scripture that it did not), where can be the ground of refusing a reverent recognition in the case of the Christian Church, to which the promises of a never-failing subsistence are far more solemn and express than any made to the Aaronic priesthood? Most certainly, amidst all the fragments into which the malice of Satan has shivered that great body the Church, which Christ and his Apostles represent as essentially one, and which in the Creed we ever profess to believe as such,—these have been the principles, and until these modern times the wholly unquestioned principles, of all Christendom, respecting the commission necessary to deliver Christ's word and sacraments to mankind. And though it has been said, that we in England set up a new Church three centuries since, whatever popular language may utter, or even statesmen assert, our Church has never for a moment admitted a proposition so self-condemnatory and suicidal as this : she has ever maintained her identity with the Church of Bede and of Alfred—whose revenues she holds, and in whose cathedral sees she yet maintains the succession to those holy men by

whom our pagan ancestors were converted. And with respect to the fact, that is indeed too true,—the fact that all with Catholic hearts amongst us deeply feel and lament,—that there is schism and separation between us and other branches of this One Church, we call God earnestly to witness that the separation was not of us; that neither our forefathers nor we desired or desire it: the separation was of those who would usurp authority over our faith, and drew a chasm between us, by imposing terms of communion which the Catholic Church of old neither enjoined nor knew.

Now these being the facts respecting the Christian ministry, of which all may satisfy themselves, and of which no thinking person can bring himself to believe there is nothing in it,—may we not appeal, my brethren, to all among you, whether it can be in the sight of God a slight matter to depart from a rule so plain, so easily regarded as this,—which, if generally recognized, would so heal our present miserable divisions,—which ministers to no man's pride or self-esteem;—(those who would tell us so have never attempted to realize the idea of it to their own minds)—which, on the contrary, inspires humble and awful thoughts in all, of mutual duty and responsibility,—which alone binds us in the links of one continuous chain with the great body of the faithful in time past, and with the great mass of those whom now we hope to see led, through the spiritual means entrusted to them, to the high spiritual hope of their heavenly calling? How can it be innocent—and how much less, as

some appear to think, a mark of superior piety—to overlook with contempt matters of such deep import as this, to pronounce every thing in the Church to be of merely human institution,—and on the strength of this proposition (which indeed alone could support such a conclusion) to equalize ministries which neither have nor pretend to have any claim to Apostolic descent, with those which thus evidently possess it? Alas, by such a course we do not elevate those ministries, we only degrade or deny our own: charity therefore, the plea of which leads many easy minds to this course, gains nothing by it; while truth, the best support of charity, unspeakably suffers. While in earnest charity we deplore the separation of our brethren by baptism from the true fold that should contain us both,—while in sincerity we acknowledge and thank God for any good that we behold there,—may we not owe it even to them, who are unconsciously retained in much of the truth they still hold by causes which they themselves decry or despise,—may we not, I say, owe it to these our dissentient brethren as well as to others, not to make light of the great difference of principle that here divides us: the principle in *us* of mere submission to an ordinance of divine origination, the principle in *them* of human creation and self-choice in the matter? This latter principle on which alone the separation is retained, when their forefathers' plea of our antichristianism is abandoned, is one that makes the separation more obviously inexcusable; and tends, if fully developed,

to a guilt no less than that of their fathers. It is charity as well as piety that requires us to abide ever by the order and discipline of Christ's household, in which He by the laver of regeneration has placed us; to avoid, as snares of the tempter, all pretences, however apparently pious, for assuming in that household a place which has not been divinely assigned to us; to avoid, as the primary evil of all, the carnal self-will which is at the root of all violation of God's commandments; and to repeat from the heart those ejaculations of our Litany, which are assuredly not words without meaning, nor ever to be so used by a Christian; "From all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion; from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word and Commandment,—good Lord, deliver us."

Such, then, Christian brethren, are the sentiments which this anniversary suggests to us. And can it be that these principles—to which in her day of suffering, as well as of triumph, our Church bore witness,—should now come with an unwonted or unwelcome sound to any of us? and this too, when in the further development abroad and at home of the several ministries instituted in neglect or contempt of apostolical succession, and their inability to maintain unchanged the deposit of sacred truth amidst the evil influences of the world, a proof has been given us of the truth of these principles beyond what our ancient confessors possessed? Can it be, that in the bosom of Christianity, and in the schools of severe and manly

thought, it should be deemed by any either a just or a scientific proceeding, to adjust our ecclesiastical theories to an assumed necessity of justifying in some way the evil that now exists,—instead of comparing all with the objective standard of God's truth, and in God's strength seeking the appropriate remedy? Can it be, that even plain heresy would be heard by many among us with less dislike, or suspicion, or obloquy, than the proposal to carry out into practice the very directions of piety in our prayer-books? Should a theology so much less resembling that of our Church than that of the enemies who subverted it, become general or greatly prevalent among us, might we not tremble for the institutions whose restoration we are now celebrating? Might we not feel as those who assay to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land," and fear that God may have begun to withdraw from us a Church, which only in its external advantages we value, and whose equally distinct internal characteristics we so little care or expect to realize?

But better things, we trust, are reserved to us by His Almighty Providence, whose past benefits to our nation we commemorate: nor would we doubt that the pledges of His ever-present goodness are yet with us. We trust that there are those among us who long in their inmost hearts for that which neither the world nor popular religion can ensure to them, the Communion of Saints; and who seek it, where the Creed declares it is, in the Holy Catholic Church; not in that non-descript amalga-

mation of truth and error which some would so term, but in that body whose sacred ordinances and ministries have descended by unbroken succession to us, into which we have been ourselves engrafted in holy baptism, and where we hope, in entire community of sentiment with all true members of Christ's body, to attain to the resurrection of life. We trust there are those who, rising above that preposterous feeling which thinks Christ honoured by ever contrasting his grace and merits with these things, seek ever to view and receive Him in the sacraments of his ineffable mercy to mankind;—who, in the holy discipline which the pious of every age have preserved, seek the application of his blessed Cross, and the restitution of his image and likeness within them; and are thus by his grace enabled to act—and, if need be, to suffer—with patience and charity in his cause.

SERMON XIII.

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE RECHABITES.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 4, 1842.)

JEREMIAH XXXV. 18, 19.

And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandments of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

THIS signal commendation occurs in the prophetic lesson appointed by the Church for this day. Who these Rechabites were who are so markedly commended, we learn only from scattered notices of them in the historical books of the Old Testament: but without some notion of their history we cannot so fully understand the blessing pronounced on them by God's prophet, and the instructive contrast he draws between them and the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. I would therefore, first, give some account of the Rechabites, and of Jonadab their father or patriarch: and thence I would proceed to the instruction which their praise and blessing conveys to the Church of

God at all times, even in this its last and most perfect development under the Gospel.

The first mention made of the house of Rechab, in the first book of Chronicles, describes them as a family of the Kenites; a tribe that had from the very first settlement of Israel in Palestine obtained a sojourn and a kind of inheritance among them. Their ancestor was no less a person than Jethro the high priest of Midian, who became the father-in-law of Moses the man of God, when an exile from the face of Pharaoh in the Arabian country; in which land it was that the LORD in the flaming bush commissioned the future Lawgiver of Israel to redeem his people from the bondage of Egypt. This we read in the book of Exodus; and subsequently in the book of Numbers, while the redeemed people are pursuing their march in the Arabian desert, then Jethro, at his son-in-law's request, becomes their conductor in that unknown and difficult path, till they reached the borders of the promised land. In that land of Canaan, when conquered by the Israelites, his descendants found an inheritance, and that in the midst of the royal tribe of Judah, as we read in the book of Judges. "The children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm-trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah which is in the south of Arad: and there they dwelt among the people." Thus, then, this people sojourned in Israel, connected not by common manners and institutions, but simply by the law of mutual hospitality which in that stage of

society is held most sacred. In what manner its claims were regarded by the stranger party we have a striking instance in the history of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: who, when Sisera the leader of the enemies of Israel came to seek shelter in her tent, presuming on the alliance and kindred of the Midianites and Kenites, insidiously slays him there, and shows the lifeless corpse to those in whose land she dwelt, of whose freedom and religion this Sisera had been the most dangerous enemy. So paramount did she consider the obligations by which she was bound to the sacred nation that afforded her and hers protection, to every other tie whatsoever. But of this action in any further respect, (on which many now take upon them to speak far more freely than the holy Scripture or the Church will warrant,) I would not now speak more particularly: I mention it here merely as illustrating the terms on which the Kenites dwelt in Israel.

The tribe, then, to which these sons of Rechab belonged, though descendants of Shem, were not of the race of Abraham, nor inheritors of his peculiar covenant; but they were bound to his sacred family by ties of no ordinary kind, by early alliance with the great teacher and lawgiver of the holy seed, and the mutual exchange of most important benefits. They had guided Moses and the tabernacle of the testimony safe across the dreary wilderness to that favoured land of God, in which they, the Kenites, now dwelt as strangers; adoring certainly with their ancestors the true God whom Israel worshipped, and abstaining from idolatry; but, like

those who were called proselytes of the gate in after times, not bound to those rites and observances of the Mosaic law which distinguished the twelve tribes of Israel from all other nations. The first mention we find of Jonadab himself will confirm the truth of this. When Jehu, recently anointed by God's prophet king over the ten tribes, proceeded to accomplish His sentence on the impieties of Ahab's house, and abolish the worship of Baal which that house had introduced into Israel, he then invites and obtains the succour of Jonadab the son of Rechab in this pious work. The question addressed to him by Jehu, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" indicates both the independence of Jonadab, and the importance attached to his friendship and co-operation in a work which (as it should seem also implied,) he, as a stranger in Israel, was not necessarily obliged to aid. His immediate assent to the proposal, and occupation of the same chariot with the anointed king, shews not only his eminence of station, but the fervour of his zeal for the true God; his earnest desire to remove the abuses of demon-worship and false religion from the territory that God had marked for his own. In rooting out these pestilent practices from Israel, we find him taking active part with the zealous Jehu. Such a man, then, was Jonadab the son of Rechab, as we read in the second book of Kings: and hence we may derive some insight into his views in that singular institute and rule of living which he framed for all his descendants; a rule which merited in them the approbation of God by

his prophet Jeremiah, nearly three centuries after his decease.

The position of a stranger in Israel, if a pious and considerate stranger like Jonadab, might have enabled him to see, more distinctly than the members of the sacred family itself, the course and progress of things around him. In the ten tribes, where at the time of the last event he appears as a sojourner, he beheld idolatry in the reign of Ahab all but triumphant,—the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal concealed from the eyes of men, and known only to that God whose mark of election they bore. And when in the person of Jehu he found at length the secular power warmly engaged on the side of the LORD God of Israel, he could not but soon perceive that the spirit of party, or of mere nationality, was stronger in the mind of his royal ally, than the fear and love of that God whose worship he restored. He must have perceived, that though the worst abuses, the foreign idolatries of Baalim and Ashtaroth, were zealously extirpated, yet from the original sin of Jeroboam, the founder of his kingdom, he never departed; namely, the worship of the LORD in another place, and mode of ministration, than that expressly ordained by Him; the sacrilegious consecration of priests who were not of the house of Aaron; the schismatical worship at Dan and elsewhere, with the idolatrous symbol of the calves annexed to it. All this Jonadab must have beheld; and he must have seen also, that even the more favoured part of the holy nation, in which the mass of his tribe had their

sojourn, were not exempt from the same evils that raged uncontrolled amidst their northern brethren. Judah, like Ephraim, had learned to follow idols; and the high places already began to manifest some of the foreign abominations which, in the subsequent days of Ahaz and Manasseh, overspread Jerusalem itself. And the flagrant opposition of all this to the law of Moses, and also to the message of prophets, who were ever and anon commissioned to denounce these evils, and proclaim the Divine judgments on all who countenanced them, must have struck the mind of this observant and pious Gentile: for the prophecy that extended its occasional grace to the Sareptan widow and the Syrian captain, would not fail to embrace also the Kenite son of Rechab, dwelling as a recognized friendly stranger in the midst of Israel. And with this knowledge of the impiety—with the ever accompanying vice and iniquity—that was ripening for Divine vengeance all around him, he might well share the sentiment of the contemporary prophet Elisha; that this was no time to receive money and garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and retinues of servants, when the fearful judgments of God were abroad for the impieties of his people; when He was about to give his own heritage to the spoiler, and leave involved in a common destruction the evil and the good,—the proprietor of the land, and the stranger sojourning amongst them.

Reflections of this kind might well produce the extraordinary rule which this Gentile stranger be-

queathed to his posterity, and which we find them, at the distance of eight generations, thus describing to the prophet Jeremiah: "Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever; neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall live in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers." By these rigid precepts he hoped to secure his descendants from imitating the manners of the people among whom he dwelt, and thus to enable them, by avoiding their corruptions, to avoid their doom also. Vice and idolatry were naturally blended together at that time, when, in the corrupt heathen system, every evil of the heart and life found itself in some way invested with the sanctions of religion. But whether thus directly sanctioned and avowed, or whether, by a more subtle deception of the heart, indulged in conjunction with the professed worship of the true God,—these vices required, in days of increasing degeneracy, a bold and resolute example to confront them effectually. And here this good Gentile thought it best to interdict even the occasions of sin. To ward off that deadly evil of intemperance, that is the parent of innumerable others, he introduced a system of total abstinence from that which had been abused: and to guard from that pernicious spirit, too commonly attendant on city life—which, in the pursuit of comforts and luxuries, loses all higher principle of action, and undermines public and private virtue,—

he caused them to return strictly to the nomadic manners of their remote ancestors. Thus he hoped they might "live many days in the land where ye be strangers:" for thus might they best secure that which was, in the old dispensation, the most prominent reward of obedience, long and happy days on the earth, when they were freed from the vice by which those days are shortened and embittered: then, also, might the external calamities which were to be apprehended fall more lightly and easily, when their wants were few and their desires moderate, and they were free from that luxurious and soft spirit to which every privation is intolerable.

This rule, severe as it was, was for nearly three centuries maintained inviolate; during which time the ten tribes of Israel had been carried away captive for their sins, and the storm of desolation began at length to hover over Judah and Jerusalem also. The advance of the Chaldean conquerors on Judæa at last made one part of their rule impracticable, that which required them to live in tents; they were forced, for protection from the invader, to seek admission into fenced cities, and came accordingly within the walls of Jerusalem. But still every part of their enjoined discipline which had not been thus made impossible, was kept as rigidly and as sacredly as ever. When Jeremiah the prophet, at the divine command, tempts them with cups of wine, this is their answer: "We will drink no wine... we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine, we, our wives, our sons, nor our

daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed; but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go up to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans:....so we dwell at Jerusalem."

On this steadfast obedience of the Gentile sons of Rechab to their ancestor, the LORD God of Israel founds his expostulation to his own people by the mouth of his prophet. For his commands and ordinances, given by Moses, were also the commands of a father. Thus He represented himself to them in those words of the prophet Hosea: "When Israel was a child I took him, and brought my son out of Egypt," in type and foretaste of the perfect dispensation, when in Christ, the only-begotten Son, whom he also called out of Egypt in his infancy, He should make all the redeemed the sons of God¹. The commandments of God to those whom He guided and sustained in the wilderness were truly paternal; they were also, notwithstanding their minuteness of prescription, far more indulgent to the natural weakness of man, than those which Jonadab laid on his posterity. There was no prohibition of that which gladdens the heart of man, but only of excess and riot, or of so regarding the gift as to forget the Giver: and with this condition, which the heritage of the Mosaic ordi-

¹ Hos. xi. 1; Matt. ii. 15; Gal. iv. 1—7.

nances kept continually before their eyes, all the good of the land of Canaan was theirs, to inherit, to possess, and to enjoy, as the very symbol of God's power and presence among them. Yet for all this, his laws were disregarded, and abandoned for mere vanities or lying abominations; and that in despite of repeated admonitions by which the law was reinforced from the lips of God's servants the prophets: whereas Jonadab's strict orders, delivered once for all to his descendants, were kept ever sacred and inviolate. From this marked contrast, the judgments on the two several parties—the Jews and the Rechabites—proceed in these terms: “Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father which he commanded them, but this people hath not hearkened unto me; therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken to them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.” But to the Rechabites—“thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: therefore thus saith the LORD God, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.”

Having thus therefore, by the light of the Old Testament records, surveyed the case of this re-

markable Gentile family, and the blessing they received from God, it remains to draw from it the moral and religious lessons which, like every portion of Scripture, it contains for the instruction of all generations. The first and most obvious lesson which this conduct and blessing of the Rechabites suggests, is the great honour attached to filial obedience. That paternal relation, in which all men are instructed to behold the most intelligible type of God's providential love and care and government of his human offspring, receives indeed most signal honour in this instance: and well may we be assured that even apparently unreasonable commands, or involving what might seem needless severity, should be dutifully accepted from such a source of benefit and authority, when we thus read in holy Scripture the reverent obedience paid to these most rigid precepts by Jonadab's children, and the divine praise and blessing annexed to that obedience. Considering also how in his case the authority of a father over his immediate offspring became that of a patriarch over the succeeding races of descendants, and how it was still revered under the paternal title and sanction,—we have here also an illustration of that process of the divine system, by which this most naturally intelligible authority is expanded into that of heads, and kings, and all other legitimate earthly rule; of that truth which Christian children are taught catechetically to repeat, when in “the first commandment with promise,” as St Paul terms the fifth of the decalogue, they learn the honour of parents

a/ primarily, but in inseparable sequence, that also of kings and all in authority, of guardians, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters. The family is the first type,—the tribe and nation is the next,—of that household which, in the Church on earth, trains for the Jerusalem above. In this and other similar sects of learning and religion a further type is afforded us, in the statutes and rules by which our collegiate institutions are governed. And while in all these communities, the connecting order and rule, which we inherit, is the means of coherence and abiding benefit to the whole, willing compliance with that order is the virtue which bespeaks our true living membership in God's household; a virtue which in the ancient shadowy system was rewarded with unfailing length of days in the land of promise, but in the eternal one is crowned with immortal life in that celestial Canaan, which Jesus Christ the Incarnate Redeemer has opened to the children of God.

A second, and a more peculiar lesson, forcibly supported by so remarkable an example as this, relates to extraordinary rules of strictness, above what is required of the mass of mankind, and the light in which such rules should be regarded by us. And this is a subject which requires elucidation; since there is danger of error, both on the right hand and on the left, in surveying it. With the habit of judging these things by the side of their abuses only, which has become most popular and general amongst ourselves,—we should certainly have expected, according to the standard of what is hastily

and superficially thought to be Scriptural religion, that the Rechabites, if exhibited as models of exact obedience to the Israelites whom they shamed in that respect, could never have been commended for the subject-matter of this obedience. We might have expected, on these principles, an appeal to this effect: 'These Rechabites have exhibited an exemplary obedience to Jonadab their father in a matter of mere will-worship, and humanly imposed strictness of rule: whereas to the commands of God truly paternal, and exacting no such wrong or exaggerated measures of duty, the house of Israel have rendered no obedience. The disobedience of Israel is indeed rendered most glaringly inexcusable by the contrary example of compliance with a rule so different: but the compliance of the others, however it may deserve reward or praise from Jonadab's representatives, can obtain none from God.' Might not this be expected upon principles that by some are embraced almost as axioms in religion? But how different from this is the actual language of the Almighty, need not be told. The children of Jonadab are praised, they are praised *religiously* for their conduct: their reward is not only that they shall stand *on earth* as a signal example of obedience to a purely conventional morality; but in the name of the LORD God of Israel, the God of earth and heaven, they are told that they are walking with God, and should not want in perpetuity for descendants to continue the same blessing,—a blessing without which all earthly prosperity, and all praise from fellow-creatures, will be empty and unavailing:

“Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand *before* ME for ever.” And surely a blessing like this would be sufficient to prove, even if there were not other examples of Scripture to the same effect, that the voluntary assumption of a rule of practice beyond what is required of men in general—nay, one which, like this, it were equally pernicious and false to make matter of general requisition, is not therefore in individuals or collections of men to be condemned: it *may* be an object of Divine praise and blessing. The circumstance of not being made generally obligatory on mankind by God, will not bring it under the name of that which is termed ἐθελοθρησκεια by the apostle; and it depends on other considerations than these whether it be praiseworthy or censurable.

To consider, then, the particular case before us, as one that will, carefully surveyed, guide us to the true principles of judgment in this matter: there is certainly no law of God that interdicts the use of wine. Its use is sanctioned by God, not only, as some would tell us, medicinally, or as the means of restoring the physical tone and strength under certain unusual circumstances; but ordinarily as an instrument of social cheerfulness also. None who reads the passages of Holy Writ where it is mentioned, none more especially who consider our Lord’s first miracle at the nuptial feast of Cana of Galilee, and the terms in which that most astonishing and significant act of power is related by the beloved disciple, can doubt that these things, as images of higher blessings, have

received the sanction of the Incarnate Son of God himself; who has reserved the best wine, in the mysteries of our redemption, to be drunk with Him anew in his Father's kingdom. Again, none can doubt that to live in fixed habitations, to buy and sell, to plant and build, are lawful and even necessary things. Yet in both respects, in the social and recreative, as well as in the more serious business of life, there is a rule of self-denial and mortification, incumbent not on some only, but on all: the spirit of Christianity, which is the spirit of its suffering Founder, has surmounted all the pleasure, the pomps, and the grandeur of this world, with the character of the Cross, which his true disciples must be content in some way or other to bear. In things which may be lawfully enjoyed, it imposes on all who would be true Christians, the counsel—nay, the precept—of occasional abstinence; while in things that are rightfully ours, it commands by its holy discipline to use as not using, to possess as not possessing; to hold its true character ever before our spiritual perception, seeing that the world and the fashion thereof passeth away.

Now that which all men must thus mix with the conduct of their lives, some men may be called by God's providence and spirit to adopt constantly, as the safer rule of life to themselves; but never, unless the spirit of error possesses them, to enjoin as generally necessary to others. To adopt the case of a higher and further matter: while to denounce marriage, or to esteem it otherwise than most holy, is the doctrine of demons and of heretics, yet there

are those who for the kingdom of heaven's sake, as our Lord himself has told us,—to be able to attend to divine things, without distraction of personal ties and selfish cares,—have followed His example and the counsel of one of his apostles, and not used the liberty which belongs to all. And, to descend to what is nearer the case before us, John, like his type Elias, came neither eating nor drinking: he had taken the religious vow of a Nazarite upon him, to abstain from wine or any but the plainest food. Thus he resembled the Rechabites: while Christ, as He himself has told us, came eating and drinking, adopting the ordinary manners, and freely joining the social assemblies of mankind. And while the one was pointed at by the children of this world as having a demon, or being melancholy or mad—the other was characterized by those who witnessed not his heavenly spirit, or his vigils of contemplation and prayer, as “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” But wisdom is justified by both classes of her children. And while the example of the holy Baptist, and innumerable others, should secure from our censure and condemnation states of life resembling his, when coupled with active piety and zeal for goodness,—while it should lead us to sympathize with, instead of scoffingly reproving, that which has been confessedly most blessed in diffusing the light and knowledge and practice of religion in past troubled days of the Church's history, (though it is somewhat hastily presumed to be now useless or impracticable,)—never are we, on the

other hand, to forget that the more perfect rule of life is unquestionably this which the Great Exemplar himself pursued; which can in its own actual practice manifest the discrimination between the occasions of sin and sin itself; which can exemplify how widely different is the Creator's purpose in forming our social nature from the disorders that sin has introduced into it; and can shew that what vicious or worldly men abuse can be joined and shared in without sin.

What then is, finally, to us the example of these heathen Rechabites? To imitate, doubtless, their affectionate loyalty, their self-denial and piety, their steadfast testimony to truth and goodness in the midst of a corrupt and apostate generation: so much is universally applicable in their case. It were an unhealthful and disproportionate sort of piety which should attempt to imitate them in abstinence from social pleasures, while it overlooked their equal abstinence from all gainful or enriching occupations. This, to which some one-sided views of sanctity induce many amongst ourselves, is no true contemplation of these or other great examples: the eminent saints of God at all times are those who sit the loosest in their attachment to both—the gainful business, as well as the pleasure, of this world; or, rather, their chief solicitude is against the first, as the greater danger: our Lord, who has little to say in proscription of mere amusement, is most earnest against the care and the love of earthly possessions. And who will say that something resembling the spirit, if not the conduct, of the Re-

chabites, is now enforced on the attention of us all; who see, in proportion to the growth of that comfort and luxury which we are all so much disposed to identify with social well-being and happiness, the gulf growing continually wider between us and the necessary instruments and producers of that luxury, and a dominion of moral and physical evil beyond what our good forefathers could have seen or imagined? Who does not see that this is a time to pray for a larger infusion of that which is the true spirit of Christ's religion, the spirit of self-sacrifice for others; a time, when trouble and confusion are menacing us, to chasten our souls with fasting and weeping and mourning, if perchance the Divine judgments which our sins have provoked may be averted from our highly-favoured but too thankless country.

But to conclude. Let not the universal application of this example be forgotten. Seeing that to all who dutifully take it up, Christ's yoke is indeed easy, and his burden light,—since his commandments are not grievous, as his beloved disciple has declared, either in what they enjoin or what they forbid,—what shall be said to those among us, who, from mere self-will and the darkness of their carnal mind, throw off all concern for that service which is perfect freedom? What will they say in the day of account, when shown the martyrs and confessors, the monks and hermits of other days, and it shall be said; These cheerfully obeyed the strict and hard service imposed on them; while the far easier walk—the plain walk

of ordinary godliness, soberness, and charity, has been by you set at nought. Think of this ere the Judge is at hand: seek through Him, who is the Only Source and Giver of grace, the spirit enjoined in this day's Gospel¹, which sinks all worldly anxieties in one engrossing pursuit, that of the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Thus, and thus alone, shall all things really needful be added to you.

¹ Matt. vi. 24—34.

SERMON XIV.

JOB PENITENT.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the First Sunday in Lent, March 5, 1843.¹)

JOB XLII. 5, 6.

*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now
mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and
repent in dust and ashes.*

THESE words stand at the close of a debate, which is among the most remarkable, whether we consider the age, the subject matter, or the parties, that ever was recorded by man. With respect to the age, it is the most ancient composition of which we have any knowledge. Its subject matter is that which has, above all others, exercised and perplexed the minds of the highest order in every time,—the apparent inequality of the divine proceeding, the strange uncertain distribution of good and evil in the world. And as to the parties concerned; they are men with hearts deeply interested in this great question,—simple, yet elevated and fervent, in their conceptions respecting it, as might be imagined of the purer and more pious inhabitants of the primeval world; and the concluding speaker, the summer up of this great controversy, is the Al-

¹ Preached before in India, in Lent, 1834, &c.; and since in the Temple Church, London, on Passion Sunday, March 9, 1845.

mighty Himself. We need not, at this time, turn our more curious thought to the author of this dramatic work, or rather to the reporter of its events and dialogue; nor point attention to the singular manner, in which the total absence of all reference or allusion to Israelitic matters, the purely Arabian character of the imagery and discourse, joined with the occasional intermixture, in wonderfully elaborate terms, of features in nature and art, peculiar to the land of Egypt,—all point to Moses, while yet an exile in Midian with Jethro, as its probable compiler. Our attention need not be diverted by these thoughts, interesting as they may be, from what is of universal spiritual application in this example. Sufficient for us is the testimony of Prophets and Apostles and the whole Church, that this book, thus entirely Gentile in its complexion, has ever been preserved by the Hebrews among the sacred books of their canon: that all, inspired and uninspired, refer for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, to the book bearing his name, who says in the words just read, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Who then is the person who addresses the Deity in this language? a language of humiliation so profound, that the whole Scripture, abundant as it is in expressions of this kind, scarcely affords a parallel? Does he come to his God, like David, under the guilt of murder and adultery, or any other deadly offence against mankind? Or has penitent remorse seized him in the midst of sen-

sual and profane habits, after a life spent in dissoluteness and libertinism? Or, after bearing a fair and honest character in the eyes of his fellow-creatures, has Providence at length awakened him to the terrible conviction—that some unatoned secret disobedience of heart blights and cankers all that is outwardly so fair,—that he is an awful hypocrite,—one whose thoughts are impure, whose services are abominable before God? What less than one or other of these supposed cases, it may be imagined, could suit the import of words like these,—words which an unexpected divine vision forces from the speaker,—of utter self-abasement and self-abhorrence?

We shall see presently, my brethren, that none of these suppositions are true. The last of them, indeed, is what the three friends of Job had been induced to suspect: but the sentence of the Almighty Judge at the close has convicted them of injustice, as well as of ungenerousness, in their suspicion. Yet—and it is this that particularly invites our observation,—that very interposition of God which clears Job from his mistaken accusers, draws from himself these expressions, and brings him low to the dust in penitence. Well, therefore, may it conduce to the purpose for which the Church Catholic has set apart the season on which we are just entered,—to prepare for the highest and holiest of her festivals, that of Christ risen from the dead, by a penitential recollection of the sins that crucified Him,—if we make this the topic of our closer contemplation at present; if we

examine the import of this confession in relation to the character from which it proceeds; if we enquire who it was that made—and why he made—this self-abasing acknowledgment to his Creator.

To return, therefore, to our original enquiries;—but without proceeding to the extreme of each case, as the history evidently does not allow us. Do we ask, in the first place, whether Job failed in any point that constitutes a respectable character in life,—whether he was wanting in honour, equity, or beneficence? Let us hear his own account of himself in these respects: for the concluding judgment of the Almighty in his cause proves that he spoke here no more than the actual truth. “When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and hid themselves; the aged arose, and stood up....When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it bare witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless and him that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor; and the cause that I knew not I searched out¹.” Can anything be added to this description in that department of character to which it belongs? or is there anything of integrity, wisdom, and charity,

¹ xxix. 7—16.

that could conciliate respect and affection to an opulent man in a simple patriarchal state of society, that is not included here? If any one could be supposed to be clear of condemnation from his behaviour to those around him, he surely who could truly profess all this must be that person.

But do we ask further, whether the man who had so many estimable qualities to recommend him to others, might not be chargeable with evil habits which would not incur their censure; whether he might not be less remarkable for temperance and purity of character, than for liberality and justice; or disposed, as to common and well reputed vices, to set light by the praise of God, being secure of the praise of man? Might he not have been given to idolatry, or the worship of the host of heaven,—a practice full of attraction to our degenerate nature, which had then begun to overspread with the witchery of its seduction that rude and imaginative people to which he belonged? or if preserved here amidst the contagion of evil example to abide by the remaining worshippers of the One Living and True God, might not his own spirit have verged to that which bears the character of idolatry at every time,—a trust in his own resources, an habitual rest and confidence in his own wealth or power or wisdom, injurious to the Great Disposer and Author of his being? On this enquiry the integrity of Job's religious character is suspended; but here again we have his solemn and well-attested professions of innocence; the Almighty LORD testifying at the close, that his servant Job had spoken with

respect to Him the thing that was right: "If I have walked with vanity, or my foot hath hasted to deceit; ...if I have made gold my hope, or said unto the fine gold, Thou art my confidence;...if I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above." So careful is this good Gentile to remove even the least instances of this great guilt from him; so far is his judgment from that of persons who think that errors of religious faith are noxious only as they terminate in acts directly hurtful to human society. But what he adds to this protestation deserves to be noticed also; it shows how in vices of the heart—in secret malevolence or resentment, the lust of revenge or satisfaction—he went further in the evangelical morality than is by many deemed possible. "I made a covenant with mine eyes," are his words with respect to all sensual passions. And, with respect to the malevolent ones, he says, "If I rejoiced in the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him—"; adding, "neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul¹."

But we have yet a further enquiry to make: we have to reverse the picture, and view this just man no longer encompassed with ease and prosperity, but in the hardest and most fiery trial of his virtue; when God had suffered the accuser of men to fulfil

¹ xxxi. 5 seq., and 24—30.

his designs upon him, deprived him of his children and possessions at a stroke, and visited him with loathsome disease; when, to use his own expressions, "the arrows of the Almighty were within him, and their poison drank up his spirit." When, in addition to all this, the friends who came with the charitable purpose of soothing his sorrow, were led by the then current notions of Divine Providence into strange suspicions concerning him; when the idea that some crime of heart and life must have led to so fearful a reverse, is introduced at first¹ with a kind of delicacy and tenderness into one of their addresses of advice and comfort, but, upon his passionate denial, is repeated with less reserve or management;—carried out into sharp rebukes, and when opposed, into angry and perplexing disputations. Do we ask, then, whether this trial, than which we can scarcely imagine any more severe to an innocent sufferer, might not move him to impatience even with respect to God; to a state of feeling as to his past choice, resembling that of those Israelites whom the prophet cites as saying², "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" But neither is this the case with Job. His example is not indeed perfect: he has by no means retained that unlimited commendation given him at the commencement of his trial, "In all this Job sinned not, neither charged God foolishly." Many an angry speech and taunting recrimination to his

¹ Job iv., v.² Mal. iii. 14.

friends may be seen in his discourses and replies; much also that is far from being exempt from blame in the tone of his expostulations with God; yet the assertion of the holy apostle James stands uncontradicted in Scripture—exhibiting Job even to Christians as a most bright example of pious resignation under suffering¹. There is in him no murmuring against piety itself; none of that envy of the sinner's condition, which formed the temptation of the good psalmist Asaph; none of those expressions of contradiction against God, which irreligious sufferers are wont to use, in any instance escape from him. In his bitterest and most impatient moments we may yet recognize the child of God; who beholds the Almighty's hand in all things, and counts it the greatest of miseries to be estranged from Him. "Though He slay me," he declares, "yet will I trust in Him." "I have sinned, and what shall I do to thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, that I am become a burden to myself?" And even those impassioned words of his vindication may serve to express his faults and excellencies together: "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; all the while that my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. ...Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me:...for what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"

¹ James v. 11.² Job xiii. 15; vii. 20; xxvii. 2—8.

Need we then, after hearing the solution of these questions concerning Job, proceed to another, which a novel opinion only has attached to his case, and ask whether this man might not have been, previously to the confession of my text, utterly mistaken in his religious profession and hopes ; still unsubmitted to the righteousness of God, and labouring to establish his own in its stead ? Such is the view which a partial systematizing in religion has led some to take of Job's character in this history ; and to suppose that the discourses of his friends Eliphaz and the rest, whom we all see to be pious men, were vainly directed to lead him to the truth on this point of justification¹ ; instead of being pointed, as they were, to prove that God's judgment had singled him out as an unrighteous man. But scarcely can anything be imagined more opposed to the real tenour of the book, or to the whole testimony of Scripture concerning it, than this. The bare fact, that Job is pronounced by the Omniscient Judge to be right, and the three friends wrong, in their respective testimonies respecting Him and his proceedings with mankind², should surely suffice to shew the utter unreasonableness of that view, which would suppose him to have been maintaining throughout a false position against them on a fundamental point of religion. Neither is this contrariety removed by saying, as one of note has lately said,

¹ This idea is largely maintained by Mr. G. S. Faber in one of his numerous systematic works. But the notion, as far as it respects Job himself, may be seen in the late Dean Milner's account of his brother, in the sermon of an eminent living presbyterian minister on Job ix. 30—33, and sundry other preachings and writings within the last sixty years.

² Job xlii. 7.

that the friends maintained the truth with unfeeling bitterness, while Job with a right heart upheld a falsehood. For, beside the contrariety of this to the actual argument, neither is it quite just with respect to them; nor, in his case, will it consist with a right heart to be radically wrong on the very turning point of his acceptance with God. If, up to the moment of his final confession, all his religion had been erroneous,—his hopes and trust for the future all misplaced,—what then means the high commendation of the Almighty at the close of the drama? what the praise of the Holy Spirit in other parts of Scripture, in Ezekiel, in St James, and elsewhere? Dismissing, therefore, a hypothesis so opposed to the sentiment of the universal Church on this ancient example, I would remark, that though Job was not indeed a Christian,—though he had not, and could not have, that distinct view of grace overruling human weakness, which the actual possession of the divine mysteries affords to us,—though he had not even that typical foretaste of these mysteries which formed the peculiar possession of the race of Israel,—though he was thus neither Jew nor Christian, but a Gentile Idumæan inheriting little from his fathers beside the pure truths of natural religion (which were then fast corrupting throughout the heathen world), acknowledging the dominion and majesty and holiness of God, with his righteous judgment and government of the world,—yet was his hope founded, not on the demands of debt which he might have upon God for the merits of his goodness, but on

that which has alone sustained the true obedience of any man since the fall, the hope of Divine mercy¹;—a mercy which, implicitly apprehended in the previous generations of the world, was finally manifested to mankind in the Incarnate Son, the sole Source of salvation to all. Nor was he without some degree of explicit apprehension of this, the travailing hope of expecting humanity. Hear him when he states his confidence respecting his final vindication, in the course of the argument with his friends: he does it in those ever-memorable words², “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” In these words, of which the old patriarchal law of the vindicating kinsman formed the material, Job expresses his firm confidence, that, amidst all failures of issue and kindred, all decays of his own outward tenement, he had yet a *Goel*, an Avenger, living;—one who, to quicken him to everlasting life, should stand clothed in his own flesh and blood upon this earth;—through whom, and in whom, he should himself see God. Of this kind was the faith of this distinguished Gentile towards the yet distant Redeemer of men: and his practice, in which, as the Scripture teaches, lies the whole soul and manifestation of faith, is such as we have already seen; such as to merit the character given of him, even before his great trial, by the Holy Spirit, that he

¹ ix., x., xiii., xxiii., &c. &c.

² xix. 25, 26, 27.

“was perfect and upright; one that feared God and eschewed evil¹.”

Such, then, in act and in suffering, was the excellent person before us: so proved by his works; so commended by his Almighty Judge; so witnessed by Divine inspiration in the New Testament, as well as the Old, to have been just and faithful under his most severe trial. Let us mark then his language in the text; “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” The perception of God, in a nearer view of His character and attributes than he had before been enabled to take, has given this striking turn to his thoughts: it has caused him to forget all the virtues and correctnesses on which his mouth dwelt so largely in self-vindication to his friends but just before; and to have now but one thought respecting his own character and deserts, when exposed to the scrutiny of the Almighty All-seeing Judge. God had passed before his eyes, as before those of the other speakers in this remarkable religious controversy; and though his cause is soon to be approved as right, while that of his friends, as far as opposed to him, was wrong, the correctness of his cause occurs not to his thought, but only its weakness, on hearing the rebuke that God had just passed upon them all. To all their too forward arguings as to what ought to be, and what ought not, in the Divine government,—to the passionate questionings of Job,—to the zealous assertions of the slow but sure judg-

¹ i. 1; ii. 3.

ment on transgressors made by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar,—with the milder, but abortive attempt of Elihu to strike out a middle course in the argument,—God has but one assertion in reply, that of his own infinity and unsearchableness. He asks, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” He points to the stupendous works of creative wisdom, to the fierce inhabitants of the air, earth, and waters; and asks whether it is for man, whose birth is but of yesterday, whose faculties and range of operation are so limited, to canvass His character and proceedings. And upon this interposition of the Almighty the confession of Job is immediately consequent. He acknowledges at once the folly and the sin of questioning the Omniscient,—of every deflexion, however minute, from the course of absolute submission of heart to God: his ideas of the Deity, ere this vision of the Divine greatness passed before him, he considers as traditional forms or shadows of the Truth; but now he perceives himself in the presence of God to be sinful and nothing. “I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be hidden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

And must not such a confession, from the lips of such a man, enforce upon all the absolute necessity of that repentance which the present season calls to mind? Is there any one who thinks in his heart that particular and personal repentance for sin is to him unnecessary; who repeats the general expressions of penitence that he finds in our Litany and Church offices, not because he acknowledges their application, or can feel their reality, but as a sort of court-language, fit and decent to be adopted when we come before the majesty of heaven, but possibly exaggerated in itself, as ceremonial expressions among men usually are, and, as far as he conceives his own case, certainly so? Is there any one, in a word, who shrinks from thinking himself, really and without exaggeration, a *miserable sinner*? To such an one let this question be addressed; Are you a better man than Job? Is your life more honourable, more useful, more sober, and more pious, than his? If his expressions of repentance were so humiliating, so self-abasing, what then in reason should be yours?

It may, perhaps, be said in reply; 'This man, though better doubtless than most of ourselves, had particular and special reasons for so expressing himself.' But, setting aside all that can be deemed peculiarities in his life and trials, let us observe the substantial import of his confession. Job speaks thus, because he had questioned too passionately—he had suspected too hastily—the dispensations of the All-wise, the All-just and All-merciful. Is there

not then, even in this kind, some offence to answer for and to repent? Ask what has been, what is, your disposition on the numberless occasions when the Divine Providence opposes you; when it crosses your notions of right and equity. What is it in the more generous objects of concern, when the cause you think the best is suffering or in jeopardy? and again, what in matters of more selfish pursuit, when your desires and interests are disappointed? Is it the childlike—but only just and reasonable spirit, which trusts the Almighty throughout; as One who will, in his own good time, bring the righteous cause forth to open day,—and meanwhile, ere his kingdom come, will make all work together for good to them that love Him? Or is it the still restless heaving of desires ungratified, and seeking their solace in every quarter rather than in God,—looking to the world for that which the world cannot give, and becoming ever more like the troubled sea which cannot rest? And may we not accordingly look to sadder depths than these in our self-examination? Has there not been an atheistic disregard of God, as the sole giver of all lower blessings,—an idolatrous trust and confidence in the creature,—or, worse than all, a quenching of the Divine light within that warns of evil, and (for the time at least) a reckless disregard of the Divine judgment? When God is seen in a light that represents truly, however faintly, his holiness and justice,—his perpetual presence and preserving care of us,—what should be the penitent self-abasement produced by the consciousness of sins like these?

And if, from this very slight sketch of our self-inspection as regards God, we pass to the duties towards man,—on which Job has no censure whatever pronounced against him in this Divine history,—who can hear his protestations, and pronounce himself to be equally guiltless on the same articles? And if not, with what justice can self-humiliation be declined before the God whom we have thus offended by omission and commission, when this just and comparatively innocent person has thus humbled himself before? Will it be said that his sarcastic and contemptuous reflections on the friends that so injuriously suspected him, furnished a peculiar ground for humiliation in his case? Be it so: but then consider what is your feeling towards the enemies—or the friends—who provoke you? Is there no thought of retort, or of worse retaliation, when unkindness or reproach has been manifested in quarters where sympathy and aid might have been looked for? And what is your thought towards those by whom your merits, real or imagined, have been overlooked or slighted? what towards those whom you conceive less deserving, but who are more favoured than yourself in worldly fortunes? Beside these offences against the last and most searching command of the second table, are there no express transgressions of the preceding laws to answer for? some, it may be, calling, not only for confession to God, but for reparation to man? And, worse than the killing of the body, may there not be some whom by your example you may have led to disobedience, or confirmed in it, to the great

peril of their souls as well as your own,—calling for sorrowful confession of such heinous guilt,—for repentance in dust and ashes?

I am not now detailing the substance of such enquiry, but merely giving such hints towards it as the present example may suggest to every serious person. And there is none who has in good earnest addressed himself to that service which, in its nature and in its issues, is perfect freedom,—none to whom the great law of charity, of love to God and man, has in any measure unfolded itself,—but will instinctively carry these observations to his own conscience in a variety of particulars. Most happy is he who has the least to reproach himself with: but, generally, in proportion to the sincerity with which the renunciation of sin is maintained, will be the keen perception and abhorrence of the defilement that yet remains. To no earnest cherisher of the regenerating grace imparted to him will the language of this ancient saint appear excessive or unnatural; whether as applied to past wilful transgressions, or to present frailties and imperfections. “Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer thee?” is yet—must ever be—the voice of true contrition; but, blessed be God, not of despair: while the mercy of the covenant remains to which we are consigned; by virtue of which alone we have the heart, the will, and the encouragement to repent.

But we have not yet considered the full application of the ancient penitent’s words to ourselves. “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee,” forms the declared

ground "wherefore" he repented to a degree unknown to himself before. And to us, rather than to those of his own, or any other of the earlier dispensations, did the Spirit that directed him intend these last words to apply. To us, as St Peter observed of the prophets' anticipations¹, are these words more applicable than to Job himself: for it is ours to behold, exhibited in distinct form and feature, that "image of the invisible God" which he but dimly foresaw at the distance of ages. "No man hath seen God at any time," saith St John²; "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." By his inherent Divine authority, as the Eternal Son, He has declared to us the will and counsel of God: in his own undivided person also has the same Eternal Son Incarnate, the Man Christ Jesus, shewn us the true rectitude of our own nature,—that standard, compared with which we exhibit at best but defect and sin: He has moreover shewn, in the process of his own wonderful humiliation in this world, what is the operation of sin as directed against the true Light that shone there. Before, perhaps, we might have thought that the corruption of the world was partial; that sins inherent in our own hearts had little or no concern in the crying evils we everywhere witness; that a life exempt from the grosser disorders that visibly affect society, a life devoted to self-gratification and the love of the world, could have nothing in it so very criminal. But this great mystery of godliness, God manifest

¹ 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12.

² John i. 18. 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.

in the flesh, hath given us other thoughts in this matter: when we see the men of this description, wise according to that wisdom, and moral according to that morality, hurried on by the very circumstances and necessity of their position to a leagued hostility against Him: when we see Him, the only perfectly virtuous among the sons of men, of all the most reviled and injured, till the death on the cross, with the events that closely followed, accomplished the greatest moral revolution of which this earth was ever witness,—whose external effects are stamped even upon the sinful world,—what is the solution of this marvellous appearance, visible before our eyes, its traces most real, most ineffaceable? What but that which our baptism sensibly conveys to us, which holy Scripture declares, and the holy Church ever witnesses to us—that we should view in that death of shame the punishment of our own sin, and in that rising again to life and power, our own redemption to immortality? He “bare our sins in his own body on the tree¹,” said his chief Apostle—“that we being dead to sins might live to righteousness; by whose stripes we are healed: for we were as sheep going astray;” but in him “who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God,”—by his resurrection, and by the laver of baptism applying its virtue,—we are washed and saved and sanctified.

In this vision, therefore, of the Godhead, which the Holy Spirit makes known to us of the Father and of the Son, our path to eternal life is both

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 24, 25; iii. 18, 21, 22.

secured and indicated. We must suffer with Christ, if we would reign with Him : we must be dead, if we would live with Him : if we would well keep our Easter festival of hell vanquished, death and the grave spoiled of their prey, we must first bear the Lenten garment of penitence ; we must lay the foundation deep in the renunciation of evil ; we must recognise and hate accordingly the sins that nailed the Lord of life to the accursed tree : with Him also we must bear our cross, and follow Him in his humiliation to glory. Many there are, indeed, in whom the chilling deadness of a preceding age, followed by a religion of irregular excitement, has blunted spiritual perception in these matters, and caused the ever unvarying directions of Christ's Church to be heard as novelties. But to whomsoever the call to reflection and repentance falls utterly unheeded,—on whom the rule of restraint and mourning and self-humiliation for sin suggests only topics of ridicule and senseless opprobrium,—of all such we say that they probably—they almost certainly—delude themselves when they think they trust in Christ alone for salvation. They who say that by looking to Christ crucified we are saved, do indeed speak a great truth, if only it be rightly understood : but that cross saves none in whom its own image and likeness is not expressed and exhibited. Light indeed and easy is its burden to him from whom its first impress on his forehead has, by God's mercy, not wholly passed away ; but severe, and painful, and drawing blood, where cherished lusts require its power to crucify and destroy them

within; but blessed, at all expense of pain, is its burden, when felt as the appointed share of His load who alone trod the winepress of Almighty wrath on our behalf, and has shared our death in its most appalling form, that we might share his immortality.

Let it not be imagined, in conclusion, that there is in this course anything truly repugnant to human nature, and destructive of human happiness and freedom. For, whatever may be the apparent contrariety of this doctrine of penitence to the first wishes of a race whose original instincts date from a period of purity,—where was as yet no fall, and no painful recovery,—be assured that, as applied to us at present, young or old, rich or poor, the objection is wholly unreal and untrue. No happiness is consulted by declining that cross which Christ our Saviour and Lord sets before us; even the hard, and it may be, painful curb it sets on headstrong inclinations and passions. A more cruel and intolerable burden is in certain reserve for us if we refuse this,—the galling yoke of tyranny which the flesh, the world, and the devil, rivet upon all their votaries. Could the dismal sorrows of that yoke, even in this life, be contemplated closely, which the fair show of the world keeps close concealed, that other yoke would not seem gloomy which Christ's propounds to us; the only real gloom which lies not in itself, but in the sin which it vanquishes and extirpates. Most certainly, the real gloom and unhappiness is his who cannot bear to look inwardly on himself: who cannot, without

madness, conceive himself alone before God, as he must be when the veil of flesh is burst, and that all-piercing eye is fixed on him and his sins for ever: who flies in every direction to avoid this consciousness, and turns even what is innocent in life into studied means of hiding himself from his Maker. To those who are yet recoverable from such a state, the words of Eliphaz, in this book, contain the only direction; "Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace:" seek to know him, though the first effect of that sight be to abhor thyself. In that course, perseveringly pursued, is that which alone brings consolation: the godly sorrow that chastens the heart and expels the sorrow of the world that worketh death: the faith which, overcoming the world, teaches how to use it, and how only to enjoy what is good in it. This alone secures that peace of mind which passeth all understanding; which, as to the restored Job, gives back in double measure the value of all that its severe discipline had taken away.

SERMON XV.

THE RELAPSED DEMONIAK.

(Preached at St Mary's on the Third Sunday in Lent, March 19, 1843.¹)

LUKE XI. 24, 25, 26.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

IN the services of this sacred season, conversant more than any other with the severely admonitory and awful parts of religion, a certain gradation is observable; which, considering the great antiquity of these offices in the Church of Christ, and the immemorial observance of some,—may well demand a careful and reverent attention. Beginning on Ash Wednesday with directions from the law, the prophets, and the Gospel, to ponder well the sins for which the Divine malediction is due, and turn to God in fasting, weeping, and mourning,—in the first Sunday of the season the Church warns, from the Epistle, of the great danger of receiving

¹ Preached before in India, March 23, 1835, &c.

God's grace in vain, while from the Gospel it tells of Him whose quadragesimal fast and conquest of temptation in the retirement of the desert is here, as elsewhere, the great model for his Church and household to imitate. The second Sunday, while holding forth the apostolic admonitions against the impurities of flesh and spirit that we are to mortify, instructs, by the example of the Syro-phœnician stranger, to persevere in humble penitence, under every apparent rebuff or disappointment, in hope of a gracious and blessed issue : and in the next, our present Sunday, while the same apostolic warnings are more strongly repeated from another Epistle, the fearful peril of *not* persevering, of relapsing into habitual sin and impenitence from a state of grace and salvation, is set forth in the wonderful words just quoted of the Divine Saviour himself. The three Sundays which remain proceed to evolve, at first more distantly, but then more fully and explicitly, that covenant of grace by which sin is met and removed : to that one great sacrifice of Christ our Lord, which the offices of Palm Sunday and the Holy Week following at length, set in all its particulars before us—the whole business of Lent points and culminates : for where the deadly effect of sin is seen exerted on the person of the Immaculate Surety that bore its curse for our sakes, we have that which will most inform and animate and perfect our repentance.

And well is it for us, Christian brethren, if the purpose of the Church, the spouse of Christ the Redeemer, in thus adjusting the lessons of holy

Scripture to our need, is diligently observed and followed out by us. Were we left, as too many of us imagine we are, to the unhappy freedom, or vague uncertainty rather, of building up our whole platform of religious observance for ourselves, we might perhaps imagine, that to keep the feast of Him who once died for our sins and rose again for our justification, no preparation was required under the gospel: but a different lesson is told us by the entire process of the Divine dispensations,—by the intermixture of these topics in the instructions of prophets and apostles alike, and above all, of our Divine Lord: all unite, with the testimony in our own consciences of the need of these several considerations, to approve the method which the Church of Christ from the beginning has prescribed, as the true rule and order of discipline to her children. To keep our Paschal feast, we must, as in its type of old, prepare with the bitter herbs of repentance the appointed memorials of our deliverance: we must take our redemption with all its adjunct accompaniments, if we would truly take it at all: neither, without perceiving its awfulness, can we apprehend its graciousness and its consolation. Therefore, though every Lord's day breaks in upon our forty days of Lent with an unincluded day, to which the usual mortification were on principle unsuitable,—for the children of the bride-chamber cannot fast when Christ risen is the object presented to them,—though the Easter rejoicing is thus in a measure repeated every week even now,—yet what in its weekly Sunday memorial has ever its

Friday of the passion preceding—has, in its annual return, not only the Holy Week, but a whole month and more beyond of penitential recollection to prepare for its glorious festivity; in order that, by measuring the gulf of sin, we may estimate the greatness of our deliverance,—and having felt in ourselves the fellowship of Christ's death, we may know also the power of his resurrection.

But it is to the particular topic which the gospel of this day sets before us, that I intend these observations on the general character of the season to be now subservient. For, unquestionably, among the many awful subjects of thought that can be presented to a Christian mind, none is more awful than this; the relapse from a state where evil was cleansed and removed, to one yet worse and more hopeless than the first. The discourse of our Lord, of which this sad example is the close, leads us indeed to view this primarily as the case of the Jewish people at large, to whom He spoke: but the example itself, of which He finds the resemblance in that generation, is that of an individual man. Let us therefore pursue the subject in the order of this day's Gospel, into its several stages—the possession, the dispossession, and the return of the evil spirit: and may He who spoke the example, by the same Spirit that indited the record enable us to understand and to profit by it!

Jesus “was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, that when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake, and the people marvelled.” Such was the incident which led the way to the

whole of this discourse : and the first obvious remark it suggests, is this ; that we must not consider the unclean spirits of the text as mere personifications of certain moral disorders, but as exercising a distinct substantive agency in their production, and possessing, accordingly, a personal subsistence and intelligence of their own. This, I say, is too evidently declared in the discourse of Christ, as in all the records of his and the older dispensations, to be a subject of the least doubt to a true believer : for scarcely can we, even in courtesy, allow that name to persons, who, though professing belief in revelation, avow, at the same time, a principle so directly contrary, as that of bending the testimony of their supposed superhuman guide to their own previous unassisted conception of what that testimony ought to be. Except for these,—the unreasonableness and inconsistency of whose proceeding is as evident as its pretence to rationality,—it must be clear to all, to unbelievers and believers alike, that our sacred records assert, against Sadducees of every description, the existence and the influence of evil spirits. Yet is that Sadduceeism no less strong, or rather stronger than ever, in the world : nor is there any topic on which we find more of scornful imagination, if not of impatient reason, arrayed against the divine word, than when we assert from it the existence of such beings, their concern in the production of natural and moral evil, and moreover, the importance and utility of this consideration so often urged in Holy Writ, in order to our putting on the whole armour of God, and attaining the

necessary vigour and stature of the Christian life. It is assumed tacitly that, if the advancement of knowledge has enabled us to explore the physical concomitants of madness or dumbness in a human subject, we may then treat the whole belief which connected evil spirits in any way with such maladies, as so much superseded or exploded superstition. But, perhaps, if all that science has done in such matters were well examined, there would appear more of the conceit of wisdom than of its reality in such a conclusion : since, after all our best and truest physiological discoveries, there remains a gulf between mind and matter, however organized, which the intellect of man has never passed : and all antecedent presumptions of the probability of other intellectual beings in the universe, and the mysterious laws of spiritual communication, remain exactly as they were, unaltered and untouched by our physical enquiries. Perhaps, then, a deeper philosophy might tell, that in connecting the strange prevalence of sin corrupting and destroying man's nature, with the malignant influences of higher spiritual intelligences that had fallen before, there was nothing antecedently incredible ; and that even in the monstrous forms that the imaginations of Gentile religion assumed, where beings of this nature were invoked and propitiated,—we discern but what is the natural portion of humanity, when the means are unreachd or lost for controlling its sin, and re-ascending to the Author of its being. It might then appear as agreeable to the sound philosophy of the case, as it certainly is to all experience, to pronounce

that not science, but faith working by love, is alone the destroyer of superstition : for it is not, as the Epicurean poet boasted, when the physical causes of things are known, that men have ceased to look with vague alarm and dread on the unknown power above and around them : but then alone when we have satisfactory communion with Him who is above all,—the Almighty who can control all,—and keep his own, both in body and soul, from the powers of darkness and evil.

It is the Son of God alone, manifest in human flesh, that has destroyed the works of the devil, either externally or internally : and the same truth of God which has revealed the Deliverer, has informed us more distinctly of the adversary. We there learn that he is not, according to the doctrine that some Gentile religions taught, and some heretics introduced into Christianity, a rival principle of darkness and evil, contending independently with the good Deity for the mastery of the world : but, great as is his actual influence in the evil world, he is, as all other angels, a creature of God : he is one of many, among whom he is leader, all of whom were once made good and upright, but, through the mysterious power of evil choice, fell from goodness, and having through pride aspired to independence of God, became rebellious, malignant, and miserable. And therefore, as the holy angels that retain the blessedness of their first estate, are sent to minister to the heirs of salvation,—become the attendant guides and protectors of the faithful,—abet their good desires, assist their prayers and works,

and guard their steps from danger,—the influence of these apostate spirits is exerted in the opposite direction, to extend over men the chain of their own rebellion, to spy out the avenues of corruption in the heart, to supply the proper lures to each,—blinding, and further depraving, the soul that has once subjected itself to their dominion. Moreover at that time, when Satan had not yet fallen down, as Christ declares, like lightning from heaven, and his oracles and lying wonders were not yet silenced by the triumphant invocation of the name of Jesus dead and risen for mankind,—we find strange power ascribed to these beings, (probably far beyond what has been since possessed,) over the bodily frame of man. And when the mysteries of salvation were yet unaccomplished, and the Son of man was yet in his humiliation, encompassed with our physical infirmities, it became Him first to meet Satan on this field, the more plain and palpable to human sense. It became Him to heal those whom evil spirits affected with the grosser maladies, whom they chained in moody silence or infuriated frenzy.

And here then we are to behold the manner in which this display of Christ's power over the dumb spirit was received by the astonished Jews, its witnesses. While, as St Matthew tells us, some said, "Is not this the Son of David?" the promised Messiah, of whose beneficent signs, announced in the prophets, the removal of blindness and dumbness held a principal place,—others, prepossessed against him, said, "He casteth out devils

through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils :” in other words, his power over the demons is obtained by a compact with their leader—he is a sorcerer, in league with the prince of darkness. An evasion like this, and the pretended desire immediately annexed to it, of a further sign less equivocal,—a sign *from heaven*, such as Moses exhibited to the Israelites,—could only proceed from minds corrupted, as were those of the Pharisees, by the dangerous habit of trifling with the divine oracles, and making that accurate knowledge they possessed, of the external means of salvation, a mere instrument of pride and worldly advancement : and when the blasphemous solution was extended to those powers of the Holy Spirit which Christ glorified should pour forth upon the world, it then constituted the unpardonable sin,—the sin which made further grace and remission an impossibility. To meet the blasphemy against himself, our Lord now urges his well-known argument, of the absurdity of Satan thus counteracting his own interest, and expelling his own agents and subordinates from mankind : He appeals also to those sprung from themselves who, by the use of recognized formularies of exorcism, in the name of the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, succeeded (through the power of God exerted for his ancient servants’ sake) in the expulsion of noxious spirits from the bodies of men : He declares that these also should be witnesses against them in the judgment, if they dared impiously to ascribe to the prince of darkness exorcisms effected with more signal success by the

immediate command of the Christ. The fact of demons being thus immediately expelled by his personal authority,—expelled, as St Luke relates His words, “by the *finger* of God,” or, as St Matthew, “by the *Spirit* of God,”—was itself a sufficient proof that the promised kingdom of the Messiah was come: of Him whom the Spirit of God was to anoint for these precise works of healing deliverance, and for proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord to Israel. Hence the force of our Saviour’s conclusion; “If I by the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.”

But our Lord goes further in his reasoning with these blasphemers: He declares that to expel Satan effectively from his seat in the world, was the province of *no other* beside himself. “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” The prince of darkness, who obtained dominion in the world from the time of the seduction of the first parents, can be dispossessed of his strong holds by no other than by Him who is stronger than he,—the seed of the woman then promised who should bruise the serpent’s head,—the Eternal Word of God, made in the substance and likeness of human flesh. Wherever the power of evil has been really broken in any portion of mankind

since the first fall, it is through the grace of that mysterious incarnation, and the merit of that blood which was shed for all and for every one of mankind, that the victory has been achieved: this alone has procured the strong man's armour of lofty imaginations to be taken away, and the faculties and resources, whether of men or communities, which were before his instruments of unrighteousness, to be consecrated to the praise and service of the living God. And this, as our Saviour further implies to the Jews, was the real import of that wonderful fabric of rites and ordinances, in the possession of which they vainly exalted themselves. All had no significance, no real power whatever, apart from Him, in whom they centred, in whom they were completed; to whom whosoever was not subsidiary, was an enemy; and to whose spiritual harvest whoso contributed not his labour, was only scattering it to the winds. All confidence in the flesh, even in the descent from Abraham and the privileges resulting from it,—though exemplified in the power of their children to expel demons and work wonders,—all would be eventually impotent, if placed apart from Christ, to protect from the Evil One's power; whose children they approved themselves while doing his works, and denying and opposing the truth. "All that ever came before me"—says our Saviour elsewhere¹, *i.e.* all that came otherwise than through faith in the promise, and obedient looking to the coming salvation, are thieves and robbers:" and whosoever

¹ John x. 8; coll. Luke xi. 17—23. Matt. xii. 25—30.

expects to reap a harvest of divine benefit by their means, will find his hopes and his labour disappointed.

And here follow the singular words to which we are now particularly to attend: designed to express to our Lord's immediate hearers, and through them doubtless to all others, the inefficacy of every attempt to resist the powers of evil which are not maintained and perfected, as well as begun, in the power and virtue of Jesus Christ. Though Satan cannot possibly cast out Satan, as they asserted, and even the temporary ejection of his agents argues a divine power concerned in it; yet if that power were not on its own account acknowledged and loved and perseveringly obeyed, the last estate would yet be worse than the first. So would it prove to that Jewish nation, which now exhibited the happy fruits of Christ's power in the expulsion of noxious spiritual agents from their borders; but on whom a severe and dreadful judgment was now impending for their aggravated ingratitude. The queen of the south came from afar in heathenism to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and the men of idolatrous and sinful Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonas. These examples are produced on this occasion by our Lord, to those by whom a greater than Solomon or than Jonas was scorned. For these were the models of the converted and penitent Gentile world: while to them who once were sole possessors of the promises, and who experienced actually as none others did the grace of the incarnate Saviour, the latter

end should prove worse than the beginning¹. In their days of probation they were told by the Prophets to "look to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged;" to think of their fathers beyond the flood who worshipped other gods of wood and stone, and were enslaved to all the evil practices of heathenism². But what was the evil of those early days, when Satan reigned uncontrolled and kept his goods in peace, compared with that fearful relapse, when their true King and only Saviour had been renounced? Then the unclean spirits rushed in with sevenfold number and malignity, and made of Jerusalem before its fall a hell of confusion and misery, to which the Gentile world has no parallel: in the terror of that catastrophe and the hopelessness of that dispersion, in the enduring shame and disgrace of the victims, and the degrading passions by which they were held captive, showing forth to all after generations how much worse is apostasy than native disobedience, and light rejected than original darkness.

But is the case of the relapsed demoniac visible only in that body to whom our Lord thus emphatically applied it, as reported in St Matthew, "Even thus shall it be ALSO unto this wicked generation"? Or is it not the fact, that what is true of communities, for good as for evil, has ever its proper verification in individuals? a general rule exemplified in almost all our Lord's parables,

¹ Matt. xii. 38—45 coll. Luke xi. 16—32.

² Joshua xxiv. 2, 3. Isaiah li. 1, 2.

but most peculiarly enforced on our notice here, where the matter is first enunciated of an individual man, and the application to that generation follows by way of resemblance. Undoubtedly, as St Augustin observes, we must understand this of the baptized Christian; "for by the grace of baptism is each one cleared from all evil: afterwards, by God's help, he ought to labour that he may be filled with all that is good; for if the enemy find one that has been made clear of evil empty also of good, he will take with him seven others more wicked than himself, and enter; so that the last estate shall be worse than the first¹." In thus applying the example, we are making the most obvious and immediate use of our Saviour's words: and it is in this application that the example of the Jewish community, purified as it was in a very inferior sense by Christ, becomes a source of awful warning and instruction.

Let us then, for what now remains of this discourse, consider the particulars of this individual case,—the expulsion of the evil spirit and his return. And with respect to the former, our first observation is, that it is a real expulsion, a real purification of the man in question: the unclean spirit *has* gone out of him, as our Lord's words

¹ S. Aug. De Tempore. (Serm. II. Dominic. tert. in Quadragesima): "Hoc enim, charissimi, de Christiano etiam baptizato intelligendum est. Per gratiam enim baptismi vacuatur quisque omnibus malis: postea vero cum Dei adjutorio laborare debet ut impleatur omnibus bonis. Nam si aliquem liberum a malis vacuumque bonis invenerit inimicus, adducet secum alios spiritus nequiores se: et erunt novissima hominis illius pejora prioribus. Et ideo unde expulsa est luxuria, introducatur castitas; unde eradicata est avaritia, plantetur eleemosyna: etc."

demonstrate : nor has he gone out of him of his own accord, as out of a domicile which he may freely leave for a time as his own, with a certainty of being able to return again at pleasure : but he goes out for no other reason than because he has been forcibly dispossessed,—driven out by the arm of Him who is stronger than he, even Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taken all the armour wherein the strong man trusted, and divided his spoils. This point, so clear in our Lord's words, so unavoidable in every application of them, to the Israel of that generation, and to all besides,—so absolutely essential to the force of the example, and the proper distinction between the first state and the last,—cannot be too earnestly and strongly impressed upon us all. It is no mockery of an unreal sign that has deluded us, when we thank God for all baptized persons that they are regenerate, and pray that they may continue, as they have begun, in the number of God's faithful and elect children ; when we believe in the accomplishment by his grace of the preceding petitions, that the old man has been so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them,—that the original sin has been fully remitted, and the germ of the Spirit implanted,—whereby, if improved and drawn out, they may triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh. This is as certainly true of all the baptized, as it is true of all the fathers of Israel that they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea ; that they all saw the Egyptian enemies, who would have intercepted their deliverance,

overwhelmed and destroyed in that sea; and all had the celestial meat and drink, by which they might have proceeded safe through the desert to the promised land. This is no arbitrary similitude, but that of an inspired apostle, who spoke thus to Christians whose perseverance in goodness was doubtful; and who to others whose apostasy from Christ seemed most imminent, declared that all who were baptized into Christ had put on Christ: the great gulf that separates the state of death from that of life had been to them, by Christ's mercy, vanquished and overthrown; and all that was thereafter required was their perseverance in his grace to the end.

On this principle, which our Catechism teaches every child of the Church to repeat of himself, what is then the business of the Christian? Not to be perpetually laying the foundation, as if the first grace of reconciliation were yet to be applied; but confiding in that mercy as ours once for all in holy baptism, preventing our deserts and the source of all good in us, to see only that we are not wanting to *it*; to cultivate assiduously the grace already given, attending both to the growth in constant obedience and the deepening of the roots of piety in our hearts; remembering that in the seed which first grew up in stony ground, or in that which the thorns afterwards choked, there was no difference, internal or external, at first, from the seed which was destined to grow to life everlasting: the sole difference was in the continued growth above and below, through the in-

fluences of the heavenly grace descending on the crop, and the preparation of the soil to respond and answer to that influence. Or, to drop that most common illustration, and return to that of our present parable. The house swept and garnished by baptism and incorporation into the Church, the right condition for a heavenly occupant. The thing required is to guard and fortify the mansion; to watch against the return of its former impure master.

For *he* meanwhile, though dispossessed, is not idle: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he goeth through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none." Most difficult is it for us to realize the import of these marvellous words: the restlessness of the fallen angel, to whom the opportunities of his wonted activity in evil are denied; his inability to find adequate solace or occupation in what are called here waterless places,—probably the barren wilds of heathenism on which the dews of grace have not descended, and where there are no shoots of divine planting to corrupt and destroy. Then it is that he bethinks himself of trying to regain his ancient habitation; and there he finds it, though swept and garnished, empty and exposed to his power: he enters in, and takes possession. Had that house been guarded by watchfulness and prayer, this sad result had been impossible: the good man watching against the thief's approach would not have suffered his house to be broken through; and the devil, resisted by the prayer of faith, would have fled away. The soul, aware of

its weak points, and those parts of its nature on which the old sins of unregeneracy might fasten themselves, would there have fixed its vigilant regard; praying above all to be kept from presumptuous sins, as well as to be cleansed from the faults yet secret from itself, it would not have found those prayers ineffectual: the Saviour who assumed humanity for us would be his servant's guardian against temptation; the same power by which He, the Captain of salvation, overcame the devil's solicitation, being communicated through that Spirit whom the Father for Christ's sake gives to all that ask Him. That aid had not been sought; or if asked, was asked amiss, with wavering mind and insincerely; and therefore only it was not imparted. And this is now the consequence. Having begun in the Spirit, like the Galatians, he ends in the flesh. The evils which had been actually escaped, from which the man had been really cleansed, now surprise and overcome him, as St Peter declares expressly of apostates in his day: *after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, and that through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome: and therefore, as that Apostle declares, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning*¹.

For it is not a mere relapse into the old sins of the unregenerate state that we behold, when a soul once cleansed and consecrated to God determinately abandons the path of righteousness

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 20 seq.

for the ways of sin and death. It is a fall to a state far worse, sevenfold worse in a spiritual account, however the outward seeming, the sweeping and garnishing, may yet remain so far as to give it a better external semblance. The unclean spirit has not only returned; he has returned with seven others more wicked. As if answering to the sevenfold graces of the Holy Spirit by which the faithful Christian is confirmed and sealed to immortality, we find here a sevenfold depravation, when that most holy Inhabitant is quenched and grieved and thrust away. The old possession of the citadel of the human mind by the strong man, where Christ and his Spirit were unknown, or ignorantly opposed, admitted in the ancient heathen of much that was high and noble and generous, belonging to those fragments of better human nature that remained. But when, as we see visibly in the Gospel, all the real virtues of humanity are attached and associated to the name and character of the Incarnate Saviour, the internal abandonment of that Saviour, once known and received, will not suffer any pure or exalted principle of conduct to consist with this. Not but that there may be intervals, when the tyrant iniquity to which the man has subjected himself is not actively enforcing its dictates, when better aspirations, like those of Balaam after righteousness and piety, may also have their place. But surely as the iniquity is strongly *dominant* within, and comes to reign without hope of cure, a fatal blight lies on the sincerity of those aspirations, and on all the

virtues connected with them. They perish with more or less rapidity, but are sure to expire ere long; the remnants of them that may possibly linger with him till death having no principle of subsistence beyond. When the hope of repentance fails by degrees, and gives way to sullen fear of the light that convicts and reproves,—when a dread of the examples of consistent piety turns to aversion, and aversion ripens to scorn or hatred,—who can measure the disorders of the mind, in which a desperate estrangement from God, and dislike of his image, has obtained that fearful ascendancy? “It is impossible,” says the apostle to the Hebrews, to renew such to repentance; *i. e.* such as were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have fallen away to apostasy. Most true it is that God gives pardon ever to the truly repenting sinner. But who will give repentance itself to him who has put it far from him,—when the Holy Spirit, the only author and give of repentance, is grieved and provoked to become an enemy? What if every feeling on which contrition can be fastened has ceased to exist,—and every breath of devout affection has stopped,—and baptismal grace has been abused, and wasted, and lost,—and the blood of the covenant, wherewith the man was sanctified, hath become to him as an unholy thing, and a lasting despite is done to the Spirit of grace?

Does this condition appear to any of us too dismal even for our Saviour’s words in the text,—too horrible for any one on this side the place of final doom? Yet true as it may be that the fair

show of the world may hide the workings of the reprobate mind from view; that, while the day of grace is not finally closed, there may be some inconsistencies even in the worst to prevent the full deformity of this; yet reflect that this is most surely the state to which all are gradually ripening, who, under the light of the Gospel, remain determined sinners and impenitent. To this most dismal state, I say, or else to the full stature of grace in Christ, are all certainly maturing, who now grow together intermixed, perhaps undistinguishable, in God's field of mercy, which is in the world. The final judgment knows no state intermediate between these: however there may be degrees of excellence, or of sin, in the two classes, to one of the two in kind and in character each one must be perpetually tending. And if from this hardness of heart, this contempt of God's word and commandment, this determined aversion from all good, the ejaculation rises spontaneously in the mind, "Good Lord, deliver us,"—let not this salutary wish expire unheeded and forgotten. Now when the Church of God throughout the world sounds the alarm and note of penitence, and seems by this to proclaim that the day of grace is not passed away from any, let these thoughts be brought home to us earnestly, faithfully, practically: in the assemblies of the faithful, in the silence of our chambers, let this great matter be revolved by us: let not business detain, nor recreations dissipate our minds from it: let something be abstracted from what was otherwise lawful to give the mind its true tone in this respect, consi-

dering our Saviour's words, that there are some kinds of possession which require this mode for their ejection. Neither let the opiates of the evil world, nor the cordials of an easier religion, cause us to lose the perception of the real matter proposed to us; which is, in the prophet's words, to "wash, to make us clean; to put away the evil of our doings" before the eyes of our heavenly Lord; to "cease to do evil, to learn to do well;" to seek judgment, mercy, charity, in all our proceedings: in a word, to hear Christ's sayings, and to do them; to engage in that practical and hearty religion in which alone his word and his sacraments feed and nourish to immortality;—this it is, as He hath told us, to have our house founded on the rock, on which the rain, the blast, and the flood will beat in vain. Thus, avoiding sin as the greatest of evils,—as that which can do what no other power can effect, to the ruin of our souls, and their separation and estrangement from God,—thus invoking, and practically depending on his grace, which can overcome, and will at length extinguish, sin;—thus only are we in the path of safety,—thus only have we the assurance that neither principalities nor powers, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON XVI.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND.

(Preached at St Mary's, on Midlent Sunday, March 26, 1843, where there was a collection on a Queen's Letter in behalf of the Incorporated Society for Building Churches.)

JOHN VI. 3, 4, 5.

And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

THE Paschal season, the anniversary of human redemption, is also nigh to us; and the Church from this her Midlent Sunday begins to anticipate in her penitential services the scene of her Lord's passion and victory over death. With respect to the event, in the narration of which this note of time occurs, the reference to the future is not at first sight so apparent. But certainly no more significant act—none more pregnant with meaning and mystery—appears in the whole course of Christ's humiliation, than this feeding of the five thousand. Not without reason is it that the Church repeats this as no other is found repeated, in her cycle of gospels, giving this narrative from St John not only now in Midlent as preparatory to the approaching Pas-

chal Eucharist, but again, divested of that significant preface, in the concluding gospel of her year: introducing also in one of the intermediate Sundays, the eighth from Pentecost, the narrative of the one other miraculous feeding from St Mark. Not without reason, or inspired precedent, is this done by the Western Church universally: for this feeding of the multitude on the five loaves and two fishes, is the only event before the passion and the resurrection which is found related by *all* the four Evangelists: the first two relating elsewhere a later feeding of four thousand persons on a supply nearly as small, and the last Evangelist not only adding some remarkable particulars to the former event, as St Matthew, St Mark, and St Luke had severally and circumstantially told it, but adding also at the end of the chapter, what no other has related, our Lord's inculcation on the carnal objects of his bounty of a higher spiritual meaning than they were able or willing to admit. If then we add to this the reproach which, in the two earliest Gospels, our Lord addresses to the chosen disciples themselves, for having been so slow to apprehend the meaning of this and of the other feeding,—that something more than common bread was denoted by the food imparted, and the baskets that remained¹,—we need no more to direct our special attention to this incident, as one of deep and intimate concern to every Christian.

Let us first then look to the act itself, as told in the Gospel, before we proceed to its reception

¹ Matt. xvi. 8—12. Mark viii. 17—21.

and its higher applications. No part of our animal constitution is more admirable in workmanship than that by which we assimilate to our own bodily essence the several nutritive substances that surround us; and which, for an act so essential to our continued support from perishing, supplies, not only the spur of hunger, but the charm of enjoyment; which thus also converts the common participation of food into an instrument of mental union,—a bond of sociality,—a universal recognized symbol of good faith and amity. Nor, again, is there anything in the external fabric of nature more worthy of grateful admiration than the arrangements by which the nutritive substances are supplied to man and the inferior animals: the distribution of soil on the surface of the earth,—with the concurrent operation of the sun and the clouds of heaven,—by which these substances are propagated, and multiplied indefinitely; a few seeds springing up into the means of support to thousands. Even thus is the devout wonder of the Psalmist excited by these provisions: “Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.” “He bringeth forth grass for the cattle, and green herb for the service of man; that He may bring food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make him a cheerful countenance, and bread to strengthen man’s heart.” “The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. What thou givest them, that they gather: Thou openest thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness.”

Such would be the sentiment flowing ever spontaneously from the sustained creature to the all-bountiful Creator, had man retained the integrity of his first formation: all the productions of the earth would be to him, as in the garden of Eden, sacramental media for discerning the Author and Supporter of his being.

In this manner, therefore, was the Invisible Benefactor in Paradise manifested to man. In this also He placed the chief emblem and token of his bounty to his people Israel; whom He fed with angels' food in the desert, and at length, in the promised land of Canaan, crowned with fertility and blessing; the best representation which their minds admitted of the better country above. In this, finally, was his eternal power and Godhead mainly displayed to the heathen world; "leaving not himself without witness," as St Paul preached to the Lycaonians, "in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." If such then was the universally established sign of the one living and true God, this sign should not be wanting to the only-begotten and consubstantial Son, while incarnate and tabernacled on earth. Even in the limited sphere of a human agency it became Him to shew in this, as in other respects, that "what things soever the Father doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise." To do this as man, as Jesus of Nazareth, must be indeed the work of miracle, overruling by Divine Power the ordinary course of things; not only in order that minds which through

the torpor of sin were unaffected by the constancy of God's creative bounty, might be awakened to piety by the strangeness and novelty of this; not only that He might exhibit the credentials of Divine power in his own person, and attach men's hopes to Himself as the appointed Saviour and Lord; for these reasons, important as they were, and most essential to his prophetic office, were not the whole, nor the most characteristic object of that display:—it was that He might exemplify in this act the virtue of his incarnation and sacrifice, that He might thus symbolize his character of the Good Pastor, the nourisher of his flock both in body and soul to everlasting life. The subsequent discourses in this chapter enable us, without presumption, thus to interpret the purpose of Jesus Christ our Lord: when, on a high mountain overhanging the lake of Gennesareth,—the Apostles, the destined dispensers of his grace, seated beside Him,—the Paschal feast of the Jews at hand, where they ate the memorials of the prescribed sacrifice which procured their release from the house of bondage,—He saw a vast multitude approaching, whom the fame of his wonderful works had drawn from the coasts and cities of Galilee to that solitude: and when He then addresses one of the twelve with the question, “Whence may we buy bread, that these may eat?”

Could we imagine that this question meant no more in the Saviour's mind than what it conveyed to the mind of Philip and the others who overheard it, the imagination is immediately removed

by the subsequent words of the faithful recorder of this history; "And this he said to prove Philip; for He himself knew what he would do." The Incarnate Lord had fully conceived the work of wonder that was to be accomplished: He only intended to draw forth by his question the mind of that Apostle and the rest, who had besought Him to send away the multitudes to buy food severally for themselves in the nearer villages: and all were to be made fully aware of the insufficiency of their own resources for such a multitude; and that a power no less than Divine was concerned in supplying the deficiency. The vast multitude is arranged on the grass in rows of fifty before the Lord and his chosen ministers: the distribution is preceded by a solemn giving of thanks, which, emphatically repeated both in the narrative itself and the incidental retrospection in the 23rd verse, shews that this eucharistic act was an essential part of the mystery. That act, by which alone, preceding an ordinary meal, the risen Lord was discovered at once at Emmaus by the two disciples whose eyes had been holden from recognizing him before—had, in this miraculous banquet, its majesty and wonder deeply imprinted on the mind of the beloved disciple, its recorder. And when the Lord had given thanks, he gave, not at once to the multitude, but to his chosen ministers, what they were to distribute to the people. And in the passage through the disciples' hands it is multiplied to meet the wants of all: the same power that from one grain evolves a thousand, and from the

sperm of one fish myriads innumerable, effects at once the same marvellous multiplication here: and of the fragments that remain, after the five thousand had eaten and were filled, are gathered twelve baskets full at Christ's express command, that nothing of the heavenly bounty should be lost.

Let us then, in the second place, mark the effect of this wonder on the recipients, before its proper import is discussed by us, as it was soon after with them. It is not mere stupid astonishment that seizes on this great multitude, such as we sometimes observe to be the sole effect of our Lord's miracles: their thoughts ascend from the gift to the Giver, and they exclaim, "This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world:" doubtless that Prophet who was announced by their ancient lawgiver as like unto himself, whose instructions should succeed, and even supersede, his own. Nor is their conviction an inertly speculative one: they resolve with one accord to make their benefactor a king, and avow themselves his subjects; a clear proof that He was in their eyes not only the Prophet announced by Moses, but the Christ, the Son of David their king, who should rule over the house of Jacob for ever. Were then the object of miracles merely, as we are sometimes told, to authenticate a divine mission,—and, in the case of Jesus, to establish the truth of his Messiahship,—most assuredly we might say that the miracle had worked its full effect on these men of Galilee. But what kind of impression was theirs, their history shows too

plainly. In the banquet of which they were astonished participators, these men saw only a foretaste of the abundance with which the anointed Son of David would enrich his followers: with no higher or purer affection than this, they looked to the development of the expected kingdom,—to its supersession of the novel dynasty of the tetrarch their countryman, and of the rule of the Roman procurator in their mother-country of Judæa. No better was their zeal for their king than that of the multitudes, who, when Christ's hour was nearly come, preceded Him to Jerusalem with acclamations as the Son of David, the King coming in the name of the Lord, and hung on his lips daily in the temple while expecting him continually to declare himself such; but who, when through the chief priests' contrivance they saw him a bound criminal, encompassed with the tokens of shame and contumely, turned to frantic rage at the disappointment of their hopes of a deliverer, and changed their Hosannas to cries of "Crucify him!" Such were not the adherents whom the true Son of David sought to follow him. "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he went into a mountain himself alone." Dismissing his disciples to the lake by themselves, and eluding the carnal-minded multitudes, he retires for private prayer to a mount apart, to add one vigil more of fasting and devotion to a life perpetually offered up in sacrifice to his Father for the sin and madness of mankind.

The succeeding circumstances only belong to our

subject, as linking the history of this miracle with the subsequent conversation respecting it at Capernaum: the disciples, nigh to sinking in a tempestuous nightly passage across the lake, when Jesus himself comes walking on the sea towards them, rebukes the faltering faith of Peter and the rest, and brings them safe to land,—all events full of mystery, but which concern us not at present. Our concern is with the fed multitudes, whom the disappearance of Jesus only leads to a more diligent search for him; and who, disregarding the strict rule of the Mosaic sabbath, rested not till they found Jesus teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum. It is then that, to the question their curiosity dictated—how or when he had come thither from the scene of his miracle,—he replies by a reproof of their low and sensual motive in this pursuit, and indicates the true import of his gracious work, by exhorting to labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life; the meat which the Son of Man, sealed by the Father to that work of mercy, was able and ready to impart to the soul that hungered after righteousness. But when these men do indeed understand that it is as One sent from heaven, and not as an earthly king, that He requires their submission and obedience, the tone of their discourse is immediately altered from that of deference and veneration to that of questioning and unbelief. As if that wonderful sign which so recommended him to their apparent faith as their Lord and King, were not sufficient to verify that other

less desired and welcome character, they require for this a sign from heaven,—such a mark of Divine mission as Moses exhibited to their fathers, when he fed them with the bread of heaven in the desert. That miraculous sustentation, of which the ultimate object, as stated by the lawgiver himself in his last and fullest inspiration in Deuteronomy, was to instruct them that “man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live,”—that sustentation is here pressed by these carnal sons of Abraham as a reason why Jesus should feed them evermore with such bread, in order to establish his claim as the Sent of God. But the answer of Christ conveys a yet stranger truth to their ears: that the bread He had to offer them from God, was Himself,—his own flesh given for man’s salvation: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you that true bread from heaven: for the bread of God is He who came down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.” Again, “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” Yet in more express terms does our Saviour enunciate this mystery, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my

flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed....As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father : so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. *This* is that bread which came down from heaven : not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead : he that eateth this bread shall live for ever." Hard sayings were these to the men whom the loaves and the fishes prompted to look for Christ as a bountiful monarch ; and who now say with disappointment and disgustful impatience, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Hard sayings did they prove even to the faith of many disciples ; who now, repelled by so strange a statement, went back, and walked no more with him. But it is a saying that the Divine Saviour thinks not of softening either to the one class or to the other : he asks only why its strangeness should scandalize those who were to see the Son of Man re-ascend to the heaven from which He came : He asserts also that the words have no carnal or gross meaning—but even so as He had uttered them, they were spirit and they were life : if any were repelled by them, they were not of his sheep, whom the Father drew to Him. Therefore, when many who had hitherto walked faithfully now apostatized, and an appeal was made to the twelve, among whom was but one false disciple, whether they also would go away, Simon Peter answers for them all : to whom should they go but to Him who had alone the words of eternal life, who was the Christ, the Son

of the Living God? to whom they looked in consequence, agreeably to the tenor of these words, to receive even in his Incarnate Person the bread of life, their perpetual nutriment to salvation?

And respecting the actual accomplishment of these words in the kingdom of grace, which the approaching sacrifice of Christ was to open to the world, how should it appear possible for a Christian mind to entertain a doubt? Let but the words by which, on the eve of his Passion, our Lord instituted the sacrament of his own body and blood, and commanded the bread and wine there consecrated to be eaten and drunk as their representative signs,—let these terms, I say, be compared with those of the present discourse, and the reference of the two to the same subject will hardly admit of question. Or let the words of St Paul be marked, when he speaks to the Corinthians of having received from the Lord that which he, as Christ's apostle, had delivered to them; and having then repeated the terms of institution just as the three Evangelists had historically recorded them, speaks of this as the perpetual showing forth of the Lord's death till He come again. Observe further the words addressed to the same correspondents by the great apostle: "The cup of blessing *which we bless*, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread;" thus, making the communion of saints

with each other in this service the necessary result from their joint communion with their Lord; in whose body, symbolized by the bread, they are all here expressly incorporated. Or, let us take the first description in the book of Acts of the social worship of Christians, where the *breaking of bread* and *prayers* are joined together as its characteristic description,—a description which all the notices of the gospel-worship in that book, and in the apostolical Epistles, and in all subsequent ecclesiastical monuments, unite in confirming: where prayer and praise, not instruction, are ever represented as the primary purpose for which 'the faithful meet together; a praise centering, as its highest act, in the participation of these emblems of the incarnation and sacrifice of the Lord; and where the instruction or exhortation delivered by the bishop or pastor occurs as a subsidiary accompaniment of this. And we have yet remaining in the Church to this day a visible testimony, both to this primitive order of Christian worship, and to the declining fervour of subsequent ages; the fact, I mean, that on the morning of each Lord's day or other holiday the Communion Office is begun, and forms the most elevated portion of the daily prayers; and this, even where the office is not pursued to its end, and where that actual communion which alone gives the office its name, is not realized by our participation. And this testimony to the contrast of our ordinary practice and feeling with what it ought to be, is far more striking with us than with the unreformed; since we have removed from us

as an abuse the private mass, or in other words, the communion of the priest alone in this ever-recurring office; and allow no actual communion to take place in the public service, unless four, or three at the least, are found to communicate with him.

How is it then that so many forget, or even refuse to recognize, this supremacy of the sacred Communion in the spiritual worship of the Gospel, or to view, in the perpetuity of that eucharistic feast, the accomplishment of that discourse of our Saviour in which He unfolded the mystery of our spiritual nutriment in Himself? What other reason can be assigned than that unnatural ascendancy given to the principle of negation in religion, into which external circumstances have led us,—the habit of viewing religious propositions alone or chiefly by the side of the abuses connected with them? Thus, because a gross carnal theory was struck out in the middle ages for the verification of Christ's words in this and the other evangelists, it is therefore deemed wise and pious to separate as far as possible the notion of spiritual feeding on Christ from this, which is his own express institution for that end. Under the influence of this unnatural mode of thought, it is no wonder that, as our Lord's discourse in the third chapter of St John has been denied to relate to that new birth of water and of the Spirit in baptism—which the whole Church had ever seen there,—so should this sixth chapter be denied all reference to the holy Eucharist. But if

the analogy of every other object of thought be regarded, this is assuredly not the right way of avoiding abuses or corruptions: they are effectually precluded, not by avoiding or sinking the matter on which the abuse is fastened, but rather by seeking to grasp and penetrate its true idea. And we may well distrust, on other grounds, the wisdom of the attempt to commit the sustaining grace of our one awful Sacrifice to the mere guardianship of our understanding or our feelings. Far better is to look to something visibly beyond and independent of ourselves in this matter; to receive with thankfulness the perpetual exhibition of the most sacred truths of the Gospel in that apostolical ordinance of religion, by which, according to Christ's most true promise, they have ever, even in the worst times, been preserved in life and unity and power. Nor have we reason to fear lest the excellent ordinance of preaching be dishonoured, if thus subordinated to the perpetual offering of prayer and praise through the commemorated sacrifice of the Redeemer; or if, in respect to instruction itself, it be held less vitally important than that catechetical institution in the principles of Christianity, which will ever create a high appreciation and desire of the Sacraments. Rather will it then regain its true force and dignity and usefulness, when it falls not on itching ears, or minds craving for excitement, but on hearts well chastened by the Church's discipline both of humiliation and rejoicing,—on souls habitually nurtured with the bread and cup of salvation. True it is indeed, that since the Son of God took human flesh, and

ate and drank amongst us, the very renovation of our bodies by food has a mysterious dignity to Christians,—which our daily prayer recognizes, and our giving of thanks at meals should ever imply. But there, in a far more eminent sense, where Christ has left the power of the keys in his Church to guard from abuse and profanation that kingdom of life of which the eucharistic banquet is the appointed support,—there will the faithful soul see the realization of her Lord's words; the actual reception of Incarnate Godhead; the channel of deriving from Him that strength and virtue which will guard our steps here from evil, and raise our bodies incorruptible at the last day.

The application of these considerations to the object for which the highest authority over all the estates of the realm now requires me to plead, is not difficult to trace: nor will very many words be required for that purpose. The erection of Churches or buildings for Christian worship is almost coeval with the worship itself: for soon as the means of the first persecuted Christians allowed, and long before they had won the powers of the world to their side, the rooms in which they had first assembled constantly, as best they might, for breaking of bread and prayer in Christ's name, were exchanged for fixed houses of prayer. And in the gradual erection of such buildings,—first in the episcopal seats only, but afterwards in the lesser divisions of each diocese,—and again in the greater splendour that accompanied these erections in the after age, when wealth and power, as the prophets

predicted, brought their tribute to the celestial Jerusalem, it is no extraneous and arbitrary addition to Christianity that we behold, but its legitimate and necessary development: necessary as was in the ancient dispensation the change from the migratory tabernacle in the wilderness to its fixed station at Shiloh, and thence to a stately temple of solid and durable materials, when the piety of the great kings of Israel could not suffer that they should themselves dwell in houses of cedar, while the ark of God dwelt within curtains. It were an easy and not unedifying task to dwell on the testimony which the first erected churches bore in their very construction to the principles I have endeavoured to lay down, as to the relative places of prayer and instruction in the apostolical conception of Christian assemblies: to show that they succeeded not to the synagogues of the Jews, which might be built anywhere, and partook in no degree of the temple's sanctity,—but to the temple itself, which was but one,—when the restriction of worship to that spot was removed by Christ's sacrifice and exaltation: that the Altar of each church—so called from the first as its most constant and appropriate designation,—the Altar where the memorials of that One sacrifice were consecrated and presented, and then feasted on by the faithful, succeeded to the most holy place of the ancient tabernacle: since all that the highest sanctuary of old contained,—the ark, the mercy-seat, the pot of manna,—all were but obscure prefigurations of what the Christian altar intelligibly represents,—the bread that came from heaven

for the life of the world. It were easy and delightful to dwell on the piety that multiplied these houses of prayer wherever the diffusion of Christ's household required the dispensation of his holy mysteries and salutary doctrine,—to dwell on the monuments of that piety ever subsisting before our eyes,—the beauty and the glory which they have scattered over Christian lands, (most keenly perceptible by the force of contrast to those who have traversed lands not Christian),—the abiding testimony of their ancient towers and spires to hopes and aims higher than those of the world, and to the good providence of God, watching over the preservation of his undying truth from generation to generation.

We must turn to more humiliating considerations, ere the claims now before us can be adequately met: our sins, and the sins of our fathers, require our vigilant and self-denying and penitent undoing. The latest periods of our history have witnessed a population extending itself without proportional means of grace to a degree unparalleled in Christendom; and the consequences that now force themselves upon our sight are such as none, even of the prudent children of this world, can view with indifference; multitudes perishing for lack of knowledge, and exposed to the moral disorders of heathenism, to a degree that our ancestors could scarcely conceive. “Whence may we buy bread, that these may eat?” is a question by which our Lord on high may be proving us as he proved Philip, to see what answer we are disposed

to give to it, amidst the large external resources possessed by our opulent nation. Shall we dismiss the matter in hard or in indolent selfishness from our consideration? Or shall we proffer for *bread* the *stone* with which this world's wisdom would meet the exigency of the case,—the barely secular instruction which, as far as it is real and good in its kind, imparts no blessing, but mere capacity for evil to hearts undisciplined from the only source of contented industry, humility, and charity? Or, shall we, if the paramount importance of religion be admitted, leave this great blessing to come as it may, in the form the least troublesome and costly to ourselves? Shall we view the sad rents in Christ's body, not with the eye of a Catholic Christian, who prays continually that they may be healed,—as knowing that in the rent of unity is ever a sore wound also in holiness,—or with the eyes rather of a worldly politician, availing himself of them, and so perpetuating them? and shall we really look to discordant means of this kind for effecting the spiritual good we desiderate? Far be such conclusion from us, who profess in the Creed, that there is one truth bequeathed by Christ, and one appointed method for its conservation, that of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church; and who may see that, in proportion as this mode is slighted or abandoned, the security is ever less against the worst heresies, the most fatal and impious delusions.

In this one authorized course for meeting the spiritual destitution of our country is that Society proceeding, on behalf of which the appeal is now

made to you. And while labouring to keep pace with the ever-growing needs that call for its succour, in the true spirit of faith in God, and reliance on the aid of his faithful people, the last accounts before me tell that while the grants unpaid, and liable to be called for at different periods, amount to nearly fifty thousand pounds, the sum in its possession is below this by more than six thousand. Let me leave the fact before you; and if our thankfulness for the means of grace and the hope of glory be anything more than an empty form from our lips,—if the soul and essence of our religion be charity, the charity of Him who became poor that we might be rich, and laid down his life for our salvation,—let us not deem it much to sacrifice some portion of that in which our worldly life consists, something that we may actually desire, but which, as Christ's soldiers and servants, we may be better without, rather than that this Society should be unable to continue the benefits of Church communion to his poor members. Let us ever remember that what is done or refused to these, He counts as done or refused to Himself.

SERMON XVII.

THE ACCEPTED MALEFACTOR.

(Preached at St Mary's, on Palm Sunday, April 9, 1843, A.M.¹)

LUKE XXIII. 39—43.

One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

FROM this Sunday, the anniversary of the Lord's procession in meek triumph to Jerusalem, when the Paschal celebration was close at hand, the Church begins to review with incessant and minute attention the scene of his great sacrifice for sin. On this, the central point of all Christianity, the point at which its characteristic mystery of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son reaches its most stupendous consummation—in the endurance of the worst to which human flesh is subject, and the rending in that flesh of the veil that separates earth from heaven,—our

¹ The greater part of this Sermon had been preached many years before—

thoughts will be all the more firmly rested at every time, from being more explicitly directed to the contemplation now. Well does this subject demand every preparation which the Church has given to it; well does it deserve that close pursuance of its every circumstance and every prefiguration which we have in the daily offices of this most holy week. This mystery here unfolded far transcends ordinary thought: with hearts undisciplined we shall never comprehend it; neither with the best preparation can we do more than imbibe to our soul's health some portion of that which passeth knowledge, and which angels but imperfectly apprehend.

From this scene then of the last Passion, I have selected for our present meditation one which may be regarded as introductory to the more immediate contemplation of the Divine sufferer,—the case of one who was, to all human sight, a conspicuous sharer in his suffering. The mystery of our redemption required that the Saviour, God and man in one undivided person, should be numbered with the transgressors; that He who knew no sin, yet was made sin for us, should be actually associated with the wicked in his death. And while all the evangelists relate how these ancient predictions concerning him were accomplished in his crucifixion between two thieves, one of the four adds this wonderful circumstance to the narration; viz. that the two men thus placed, the one at the right hand, the other on the left, of the Lord, in his last agony, bore in a manner the image of those who should stand at his right and at his left in judgment,—the

elect of God and the reprobate. Wonderful indeed may it appear—if anything after Christ crucified can seem wonderful,—that one of the former class should appear there, where everything by divine ordinance told of extreme guilt and extreme punishment: but even thus did He who came to save the lost,—and who, while we were yet sinners, in due time died for the ungodly,—even thus did He choose to manifest, even in the scene of his death, its atoning virtue to the worst of sinners repenting. And our penitential considerations for that season of which Good Friday and the Easter Eve are the close, can scarcely find a higher example on which to rest than this; when a repentance, deep and earnest and sincere as was this, found acceptance by a solitary instance even at the last hour, even in the article of death.

Less than this cannot be said without depreciating or extenuating (which God forbid we should ever wish to do!) this miracle of Divine mercy: and more than this we are scarcely permitted to declare. We know nothing of the previous history of this convicted criminal; nothing of his earlier habits and education; no particulars of his life afterwards, or of the mode in which he outraged the laws of the Roman government in Judæa; nothing of his later thoughts and behaviour, from his apprehension to his trial, from his sentence to his crucifixion. He may have been a common robber, or what we commonly consider a higher character, a predatory insurgent in arms in behalf of the people of the country against foreign domination: he may have

have added the crime of murder to that of robbery, or have been clear of that heinous aggravation : he may have been an old offender, taken after a series of years spent in lawless violence, or one convicted and executed, as many have justly been, for his first and solitary transgression. Lastly, he may have been hardened in insensibility and impenitence to the time when suspended on the cross,—or he may have been led, by a sense of the severe judgment of men that awaited him, to some serious apprehension of the more piercing judgment of God. On either side of these several alternations may this thief have been, for anything that we hear in the Scripture concerning him : for, considering the very common mode of expression in St Matthew's narrative, it would be too much to conclude with absolute certainty, from the plural expression in the gospel read this morning, that this robber must have joined with his companion at first in throwing the Jews' reproaches in our Lord's teeth. And added to all these circumstances of uncertainty, there is another also of very great moment. Of this thief, whose very name is unknown to us, (for the legends that pretend to assign him one are all of recent and doubtful origin), we are absolutely without information, or any probable means of judging, whether he were of the commonwealth of Israel or not ; whether, like Barabbas, or like Theudas, or Judas of Galilee, he were rebelling, perhaps with perverted religious views, against Gentile rule, and so led to plunder or murder ; or whether, like the Egyptian insurgent mentioned by St Luke in the

Acts, and by Josephus, he were himself a heathen, to whom the covenant of promise, and the holy precepts of the law and prophets, had been utterly unknown. Now it is evident that our notions of the degree of this man's offence against God, and of the extent of mercy vouchsafed to him, will vary considerably according to the place which in these several respects our imaginations assign to him : but as it would be utterly vain to seek from any other sources an information which St Luke's narrative does not supply, it is our wisdom to acquiesce in our want of certainty; nay, to view it as designedly salutary to us. For enough is left that is indubitable, on which our thoughts may safely range here. Were this man's guilt great as the worst of these suppositions would make it, or lowered to the utmost which all the favourable suggestions taken together would admit, we have here certainly a felon justly convicted, justly executed; one whom public justice had adjudged to the most disgraceful as well as cruel of punishments; and whom public mercy, that had just saved Barabbas from a murderer's death, had not been extended to spare.

To such a person, therefore, was that signal and extraordinary mercy shown, which the brief narrative of St Luke enables us to trace. The repentance of the malefactor is evinced in his incidental confession, when to his hardened comrade, who had joined the soldiers' mockery against the royal Messiahship of Jesus, he addresses the rebuke; "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly;

for we receive the due reward of our deeds." And to a repentance thus hearty and contrite, when the excruciating consequences of his crime were yet heavy upon him, he adds a faith no less admirable: when pointing to the Man beside him, then under that load of wrath that obscured his sacred person from all common sight, — he adds to his rebuke the sentence, that "this man hath done nothing amiss." And yet more, when turning to this same crucified Man whom he had thus declared immaculate in righteousness, he confesses him as the Christ the King of Israel, and beseeches Him in his coming glory to remember the person who had thus, in the midst of shame, acknowledged and humbly invoked Him; "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And to this exemplification of the two great objects of apostolic preaching, the two prerequisites of Christian baptism, repentance and faith, is the assurance of acceptance thus given by the Saviour he thus addressed,—the assurance of a passage with Him, through his baptism of blood, to his rest and to his final glory; "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." In paradise;—not in the highest heaven to which our Lord himself ascended not till afterwards;—whither also, as St Peter afterwards preached to the Jews, David himself had not yet ascended,—and whither to ascend at this time was surely no privilege of this penitent thief,—but in that intermediate state of faithful souls, the blessed division of that Hades to which on that day our Lord

descended, as the Psalmist predicted, and our Creed declares,—the state in which the departed in God's faith and fear rest in assured bliss till the resuscitation of their mortal bodies, through Him who the third day following burst the bars of the grave, and having vanquished the sting of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. In this state, elsewhere called Abraham's bosom in the Gospel, because there the faithful, his spiritual descendants, are gathered to him by angels on their release from this sinful world,—there was the penitent thief to be that day with Christ; whose presence alone made it a paradise of blessedness. With the souls in that safe custody, as St Peter writes, to whom Christ then declared their redemption accomplished, and their more perfect felicity surely approaching, was this penitent to await the full consummation of bliss, both in body and soul, "when those also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Such then is the example: and the legitimate direct conclusion can be no other than this; that there is no sin so great but that the blood of Christ Jesus can expiate it,—no sinner to whom the glad tidings of that redemption have been borne, who may not by repentance and faith plead its benefit. By repentance—deep and unfeigned for all past sin, desiring above all things to forsake it by thorough amendment; by faith—hearty and unfeigned in the Incarnate Son and Saviour, from whom the means of this conquest of sin are sought; who has by his death on the cross merited our freedom from the

penalty, and likewise the rupture of its yoke of dominion from our lives,—the Spirit of grace through the appointed channels applying to the penitent the virtue of that death in the crucifixion of sin, the principle of acceptable obedience, the faith, the hope, the charity, that issue in immortality. Had we, like St Peter, to preach this Gospel of salvation to them who had committed unknowingly the greatest of offences in crucifying the Lord of glory, and who now found that He whom they had thus rejected was the appointed Judge of quick and dead, we might then point to this example, to prove that though their sins were as scarlet they might be white as wool,—that washed in the stream which that wounded side had opened, no sins were of too deep a dye for cleansing, to the sincere and hearty penitent. Or were we placed among those to whom that sacred Name through which alone men are saved had been utterly unknown, and who, as the consequences of that ignorance, had been enslaved to sensual or even demoniacal practices,—could we then, with the force which Christ's holy Church possesses, evince its gifts of power and the might of its ever-living Lord before their eyes, that they might turn to Him, as to the brazen serpent, and find healing from the tormenting evils under which they groaned,—to these also might we produce this example, and declare, that however heinous and long-protracted their sins might be, yet were they truly repentant for their enormity, and desirous through faith in the Incarnate Son of God to be rescued from

their guilt and their abiding power, that grace might through Him be obtained: the Cross is still omnipotent against all evil, under whose shadow the penitent believer is ever safe; in which the body of sin is mortified, the world is crucified to him, and he unto the world.

Under circumstances like these we might urge, and urge unmixed with any other considerations, the direct use of this instance of Divine mercy. And how then stands the case with us, to whom Christ crucified is no new or unheard-of object—before whose eyes, as before those of the Galatians, Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth crucified amongst us in every repetition of the Eucharistic offering; who also in the initiatory sacrament itself, bear, as the same St Paul tells us, the image of Christ's death and resurrection; planted by baptism into the likeness of his death, that by newness of life thus obtained we may be planted also in the likeness of his resurrection? The example of the dying thief will *still*—will *ever*—have its aspect of unutterable consolation to the real penitent; but to this use of the history will there not ever be here a commensurate danger of abuse? when we bear in mind what the Holy Spirit dictated in that same Epistle, that “if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, Christ cannot be therefore the minister of sin; God forbid; for if we build up the things that we once destroyed, we make ourselves transgressors,”—apostates from the grace once imparted to us. When Scripture with one voice tells us of the necessity of

amended life, of turning to Christ in active obedience, of patient continuance in well doing, in order to inherit the promises,—is there no danger that, to the indolence of carnal nature opposed to this, the adversary that uses Scripture for his purpose may represent this, as at least one example to the contrary, a proof that a man *may* live a sinner and die a saint,—that, after giving himself to iniquity during the whole course of his active life, a few penitent thoughts and words, when his heart is broken at last, may procure him from the All-merciful the cancelling of a life of sin, and entrance to the joy of paradise? Now, certain as it is that the truth of God cannot contradict itself, this persuasion must be utter delusion : and to remove an imagination so infinitely pernicious, which may yet work secretly in thousands of breasts where it has never been clothed in words, becomes a duty as clearly arising from the presentation of this example, as to inculcate its direct use in encouraging the penitent. It is our duty, as we would be faithful to the gospel of God committed to our trust ; as we would not, under the specious colour of proclaiming it freely, incur the fearful guilt of preaching another gospel and an opposite one.

To guard therefore the sacred efficacy of this example, as addressed to Christians, I propose three considerations for the remainder of this discourse:—First, that this example is balanced to all men by another of final impenitence. Secondly, that taken in itself, it is totally unlike anything which those who defer their repentance ever can or do promise •

to themselves. Thirdly, that it is itself the strongest example to all of immediate, practical, and earnest repentance.

Our first and most obvious remark is, that even were this case, what it cannot be, an approved precedent for Christians, it were yet far more than balanced in that respect by the precedent of the other thief; whose end is strictly in accordance with the preceding life; such also, as if we had not St Luke, but only the other three evangelists before us, we should have certainly imagined to be the end of both. For even in the blasphemy and despair with which this man met his fate, there is nothing beyond the natural issues of a course of sin: or what, if divested of the peculiar modifications arising out of the circumstances that surrounded him, might not belong to any wilful transgressor at the last. "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." Are such words strange from one who saw on the cross of his fellow-convict superscribed, "The King of the Jews,"—and who heard the ferocious railing of the disappointed multitude below at Him who had claimed to be the Son of David, their anointed King and Deliverer? Can we wonder that this man should behold only the contrast of his own extreme misery with the asserted power which could save, but did not,—which saved not even its professed possessor;—and that, in bitterness of anguish at the contrast, he should cast in the teeth of his fellow-sufferer the taunt of the chief priests and people; "If thou be the Christ, save thyself—*and us*"? Can we wonder that the perception which could

alone suppress these bad thoughts, was wanting to the miserable man in that hour of agony; the perception of the majesty that yet sat on the bleeding brow of the Christ beside him, self-resigned to that fearful passion, and praying for his unknowing murderers? For there is nothing in suffering, in itself considered, which has power to bring these or any other gracious feelings to minds before strangers to them: rather does it harden the heart of the carnal man, by centering his thoughts on his own woe, to the exclusion both of God and his fellows. So the history of all extreme calamities sadly demonstrates to be the case with the many: and awful in this respect to all are the pangs that dis-sever soul and body. Not without reason has the Church taught all her faithful children to say; "Suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee." If thus it is with those whose hearts have been disciplined and sanctified in the school of Christ,—how then in that dismal struggle must it fare with such as have put off their repentance and hour of piety to the last?"

If any there be among you, my hearers, who habitually exclude your God and Saviour from every share of your healthful and active thoughts,—who look to the hours of deadly sickness, or it may be, to times of less extreme trouble or calamity, to give your purposes that unworldly tone of habitual reference to God which you studiously deny to their youthful and cheerful vigour,—consider well, I beseech you, the prospect you are creating for yourselves. When the dark day comes

on you unsought, for which you should be now strengthening and preparing your spirit betimes, are you sure that the very prayers which the bewildered mind will then suggest, will not be thrown by the evil conscience into something of the shape of the reprobate malefactor's,—a doubt whether the real Christ has the power or the wish to save you, or whether there be any truth or saving virtue at all in his religion? Great reason have you to apprehend, if the determination against present piety and virtue be continued, that such will indeed then be the ascendancy of unbelief and evil thought, to the exclusion of all real penitence and contrition: because every avenue through which repentance and salutary faith can come, your present speculation is closing up and destroying: the first step of repentance, despair of happiness in sin, is placed ever at a more remote distance: and that grace of God, by which alone repentance and amendment can be maintained, is so alienated as to become an enemy. It is the voice of the Divine Wisdom in the Proverbs, *i.e.* of the Word Incarnate, the sole source of all acceptable goodness, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;...I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your desolation cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer: they shall seek me, but shall not find me." And the voice of the Old Dispensation in this matter fades to nothing in awfulness beside the

voice of the New, which is the dispensation of grace and mercy. We hear it in the example of the foolish virgins, whose lamps it was too late to trim when the bridegroom's procession was past, and the door was shut; and in the declarations, more awful than we can well bear to repeat, against those who have treated as a common or profane thing the blood of the covenant that had sanctified them; who, slighting that unspeakable grace which through Christ's sacraments had been theirs, have made it impossible that they should be again renewed to repentance; having crucified to themselves afresh the Son of God, and exposed Him to shame, as open and bitter as that with which he was mocked at Calvary by the Jews and soldiers and the impenitent expiring malefactor.

And can we then, in the second place, oppose to this, even as a solitary example, the case of the penitent accepted thief? If in the face of all these reiterated declarations of the New Covenant, we think that to *Christians* wilfully putting off their repentance from known sin, this can be an applicable instance,—consider now further whether his circumstances were not totally unlike any which such Christians ever propose to themselves. I do not here mean the awful singularity of the occasion, or the personal presence of Christ crucified; because it is a grand truth of the Gospel, that Christ is yet spiritually present as ever. The Spirit of grace, the fruit of his glorification, leaves no prerogative or superior advantage to distinguish those who once approached Him by bodily sight above those

who now approach Him by faith: the mysterious grace of his incarnation, the saving efficacy of his Cross and passion, as ever set forth by us, remains the same to all ages and regions of the world. No: it is to other points more subjective, more capable of repetition, in the thief's case, that I would now direct attention; as making it indeed the most nearly answering to what the needs of the late penitent should require, but what very few of such *imagine* for their future lot, and none *hope*. To meet the needs of such as persist in unrepented sin, in whom every thought of delaying repentance is only adding fresh momentum to a habit that must be reversed if the man is to be saved, nothing should seem more appropriate than such a fate as the malefactor's,—violently arrested from without in his course of sin,—all hope of life sternly and certainly closed to him,—while up to the actual nearest approach of death every faculty was alive and vigorous to discern and embrace the new views unexpectedly presented to him. And nothing is *less* suitable to meet the needs of such a case than the insensible approach of mortal illness, with the hopes of life belonging to its first—and often its later stages also, with the languor and listlessness of thought that its progress brings with it; in which, however the prostration of mind that may ensue may wear the appearance of a change to pious meekness or resignation, the resemblance is a delusive one, as the return to health would show: it is but the old character moulded into its new circumstances; all energetic change (and such

must be what is here required,) being next to impossible. What then is it that the delayer of repentance expects? Is it to be brought out to certain death, so that no worldly thought or hope whatever on the one hand, and no decay of natural faculties on the other, may interfere with the total conversion of heart he then meditates? No certainly: he looks for something less terrible than this,—an ordinary demise by the merciful processes of nature: and this is a case of which the blessedness consists in having nothing left to do but to die; to summon to the conflict with the last enemy the forces which Christ's word and sacraments supply to those who have learnt to appreciate them. But utterly unfitted is the sick soul and wasted frame for the rough work of entire repentance; for turning the current of thought into channels entirely new; and for asking of that Lord, whom all previous acts and neglects had outraged, to be remembered for good in his coming kingdom.

And if the utter unfitness of the sick and dying for such a work can be doubted, ask and learn from the conduct of friends and attendants, even some of the better sort, on such occasions. Are they so sensible of the goodness of this opportunity of repentance as to watch for every symptom of it that may arise? do they seek to present the man's past sins to him in such a light that he may be truly grieved and abhor himself for them? and do they set before him Christ dying for the sins of the world, both as the grand motive of self-condem-

nation for having thus crucified Him afresh, and as the only stay and refuge for his convicted and alarmed spirit? Let each one's experience answer, whether such topics are not rather suppressed; whether, even when the awakened conscience calls for their introduction, they are not avoided; and whether, if a minister of Christ is sought, it be not solely to administer "religious consolation." Such is indeed the current language of the present generation respecting the proper business of a spiritual adviser in such cases: as though the dispenser of the divine mysteries could, without peril to his own soul, minister comfort when his judgment of the case has detected no penitence; or as if there were not in the spiritual world, as well as in the natural, wounds that require to be further opened, before it is possible they can be healed. But the excuse for avoiding all such topics in the case of the dying is usually that they are hopeless; that these considerations could not benefit the sufferer in his state of enervated thought and will, but could only be a source of dangerous inquietude and agitation. Now I would not admit for a moment the reasonableness or the mercifulness of this pretence: for notwithstanding all argument against the dying thief as a precedent for Christians, the absolute despair which such a plea implies is neither merciful nor reasonable. Only this I would now say to such persons: if the matter be so with the dying sinner,—if true repentance and true faith in Christ be so impossible for him to exercise as this plea supposes,

and with so much apparent reason,—then by the mercies of God let every such person be induced to apply the case to himself. Defer not this needful work of repentance to a season when you would not, even in charity, recommend the beginning of it to another; let the present time, the only one you can promise yourself, your best and least impaired faculties, be employed in the work that demands them all,—the repentance for all past sin, the establishment of the heart in the faith and obedience of Jesus Christ.

For to this end, lastly, the instance of the penitent thief is among the most powerful that can be adduced to all men; that all should devote immediately the faculties that may yet be theirs in penitent obedience to the Lord their Redeemer. To what aspect of Christ crucified his marvellous conversion may be referred, or from what moment of time it commenced, we know not; but we can trace in characters not to be mistaken the impress of the Saviour's Cross in his self-renunciation, his humility, and his charity: and while in him we have an instance, though a solitary instance, of one accepted through faith without the manifestation of it in exterior works, of which he had not the opportunity, yet by no means do we see in him a faith destitute of works, in the larger and fuller meaning of the words. For confession and interior humiliation are works; the charitable admonition of sinners is a work; and faith itself, the direction of the mind to unseen realities against the bent of carnal feeling, is a work, and one of no small difficulty. In the

manner in which the converted thief performed these works, we have the best proof that, could he have been released from the cross and restored to active life, no practical proof of righteousness would in him have been wanting. He rebukes with equal mildness and firmness his unhappy associate, in whose unbelieving address to Christ he had perhaps himself joined before; he acknowledges, what is hardest to flesh and blood and to pride of heart, the justice in his own case of that capital punishment, the bitter cup of whose torture and ignominy he was then draining to the dregs. With meek devoted adherence he addresses Jesus the Nazarene as his Lord, when He was in the most appalling stage of his humiliation; when "his visage," as the prophet foretold, "was marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men;" when those who loved him stood afar off, or "smote their breasts, and returned." He confesses the kingdom of God, bearing the ignominious Cross as its foundation, when that mystery, to the Jews an unspeakable stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, was even to the faithful disciples yet unknown; when all, despite of their Lord's previous assurances, thought their hopes "that it should have been he that was to redeem Israel," blasted by this unexpected reverse, and doomed to utter disappointment.

The reward of this faith and penitence we have heard; an assurance given to this partaker in Christ's sufferings, that he should soon share His felicity and glory. And if that honour and happiness is to be in any portion of it our own, we must seek it by the

same path as his. Whatever sufferings may befall us, we must learn to endure them meekly, as fully deserved by our own sin; to confess that He who suffered the worst in our nature for us was alone immaculate in righteousness; to abide with steadfast faith in Him as our Lord and support, whatever the present distress may be, or however protracted in this life; and to maintain a sure expectation of that kingdom coming hereafter, in which it must be our humble—though possibly our trembling—hope, to be the objects of His remembrance. Should the distress be no other than the fluctuations or perplexities that attend the beginnings of penitence, this also must be humbly endured and acknowledged as the just fruit of past disobedience: in still adhering faith, in constant confession of the truth we know, in charitable admonition of others, as far as our relations and opportunities extend, and in all other plain duties that open on us, must we patiently seek the gradual removal of our perplexities, and our surer rest on the word and promise of Christ. Nor is it only in the beginnings of conversion from evil that this lesson of humble acknowledgement has its place: for as there is no suffering which springs not from original sin, so is there none, however unmerited by us from men, which may not remind us of our personal sin, and our actual desert from God. Even if that portion of Christ's Cross fall to us, which is the blessed heritage of confessors and martyrs, that of suffering for his truth and righteousness sake,—(since every portion of that truth offends some corruption of

the world, and provokes some opposition and obloquy,)—still even here, when commanded by our Lord to rejoice and be exceeding glad therefore, we shall find need to be humbled also: we know not how far our inconsistencies may have marred our testimony,—our indiscretions blunted—or our wrong tempers disfigured it. Every where the humbling conviction will meet us, amidst the most conscientious obedience,—that we receive but the due reward of our deeds, when reverses or mortifications overtake us; that in Him alone “who did nothing amiss” is our true ground, either of meritorious trust, or of gracious support. Still, from the depths or in the fires, it remains our privilege to call on Him to remember us at last, for what we are now doing in sincere—however imperfect—endeavour to please Him; and through the grace He ever imparts to his faithful followers, to be guided through the valley of death to his eternal kingdom.

SERMON XVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN PENTECOST.

(Preached at St Mary's, on Whit-Monday, May 27, 1844.¹)

ACTS II. 33.

Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

THESE words were spoken by the apostle St Peter to the Jews on the first Christian Pentecost. And never, except in the events that shortly preceded, has the world witnessed a subject more worthy of grateful commemoration than that, which ever since the occasion of these words has been thus regarded by the Universal Church of Christ. As the greatest Paschal season was that which witnessed a sacrifice and a redemption compared with which the redemption commemorated on the Jewish feast was but a passing shadow, so was the second great feast that followed it by so short an interval in the same year, to be signalized by an event equally related to its typical precursor, and equally superseding it in the thankful remembrance of the Church of God for evermore. This will, I trust, appear manifest if, first, we direct our contemplation to the scene thus exhibited by the Apostles on the tenth day after

¹ Preached before at Lambeth Palace, on Whit-Sunday 1839.

their Lord's ascension to heaven, and thence consider the blessing vouchsafed to them, and through them to us: which is not merely the authoritative promulgation of the kingdom of God among men,—but the bestowal of a grace, an illumination, an interior virtue and power, by which it has been sustained, and will continue to be sustained to the world's end.

The Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks, when this great event took place, was a day of high solemnity in ancient Israel. From the days of Moses downward, agreeably to the sixteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, this feast had ever been observed (as its Greek name imports) on the fiftieth day after that memorable full moon of the former festival which was to be the beginning of years to them in all generations. They were to keep this as the concluding memorial of their emancipation from Egypt, whence they had so long prosperously marched from Elim to Sinai in this precise interval of seven weeks: they were to keep it particularly as the commemoration of the law, which, at the close of that period, they received from the flaming mount; the holy law by which their privileges and duties were marked out, and they were to be kept clear from the surrounding nations, God's peculiar people and chosen heritage. Then, equally with the Pass-over itself, were they in their tribes and families to present themselves before the LORD in that sacred place of their habitation in Canaan, to which the name of the LORD God should be especially affixed; whether this were at Shiloh, as in the days of the

judges, or at Mount Sion and Jerusalem, as in the days of the kings. And after their great captivity in Babylon—when God, for their preceding sins, but as much in mercy as in judgment, had caused them to be scattered in various parts of the world, whence they only returned very partially to the Holy Land with Ezra and Nehemiah,—still, I say, under the second temple as under the first, the obligation to present themselves in the place peculiarly sacred to the Most High, remained uncanceled to every faithful Israelite by any obstacle short of impossibility. How carefully it was observed at this time, in the Pentecost as well as in the Paschal solemnity, we may learn from several subsequent examples in the book of Acts. From every part of the world to which Israel was scattered,—even to the remotest shores of Europe and of Africa,—the Jew of the dispersion loved to join the Jew of Palestine in the temple of the living God, and thought little of the expense and inconvenience of his long voyage, for the honour and privilege of thus approaching the God of his fathers, who had visited them with such distinguishing favour above all the nations of the earth. Now, in the sacred city they appeared, not more to give thanks for the ripening of the fruits of the earth at that season in Palestine, than for the fruitful blessings of that Divine law of which they were the appointed guardians: thus, in the words of their great law-giver, which we have heard, did they rejoice before the LORD on the Feast of Weeks — themselves, their sons and their daughters, their men-ser-

vants and their maid-servants,—in the place which the LORD their God had chosen to fix his name there.

But another association than that which united all the natural children of promise on this occasion, now claims our special attention. In the heart of this joyous assemblage behold that small company of true Israelites who had given their heart and allegiance to Jesus of Nazareth, as their Christ and Lord: a small and obscure band they were then; but after this day they were to be so no more for ever. Behold, I say, this small company, gathered together, even as they were on the Passover preceding, apart by themselves: but how widely different in feeling and expectation from what they were then! Then, dejected in spirits, as they were inconsiderable in numbers, they were mourning for their Lord and Master, whom his implacable enemies had caused to be crucified on the preparation of the feast; and mixed with their distress at the supposed fate of their revered and beloved Master, was the disappointment of all the hopes they had conceived of him as the Christ, who was to re-establish the throne of David his father, and give laws to the world from Jerusalem. Such were their views, till his unexpected appearance among them alive from the dead revived their extinguished spirits by a tumult of joyous, but yet indistinct, expectation. And now, just seven weeks from that time, (for so God had ordered these two grand events of Christian religion, as to make both fall on the first day of the week, and to constitute that

new holy day which was to displace the Jewish Sabbath for ever, a standing commemoration of both), now, I say, on the Sunday the seventh from Easter, "they were with one accord in one place," with higher and purer and firmer purpose than ever before. Great things had occurred in the course of those fifty days to raise their views and rectify their misconceptions, beyond any thing which they had ever witnessed or observed before. The occasional intercourse with their risen Master,—not now, as formerly, tabernacled among them, but offering himself at arbitrary intervals to the sight of his awe-stricken but attached disciples, from a new and incorruptible state of being,—his declarations, no longer couched in mystery and parable, that all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth,—the higher instructions He vouchsafed, when in the course of these forty days He spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, the constitution of his Church and reign among men,—lastly, the crowning manifestation of the power which at Easter had triumphed over man's greatest enemy, when, at the expiration of the forty days, He was removed to heaven in their sight, and thus demonstrated that his victory and triumphs were not to be bounded by the limits of any region upon earth,—all this prepared them to conceive of something in Christianity more holy, more exalted and inspiring, than anything which the religious creed of their country yet possessed, or which they themselves, with all the advantage of their Lord's presence and teaching,

had been able to conceive before. Joined to this was his now well-remembered word of promise, that another Comforter was at hand, to secure whose presence with them his own departure from earth was both necessary and desirable; that word reiterated to them after the resurrection, that they should wait at Jerusalem “for the promise of the Father; which, said He, ye have heard of me;”—all this induced them to tarry in the holy city, as the Evangelist declares, till they should receive this heavenly power, and be baptized with the Holy Ghost, in a degree and in a sense of which their most favoured progenitors were ignorant. Thus were they employed in the ten days after their Lord’s final departure, praising and blessing God in the temple, and in their own assemblies apart; until the day of Pentecost being fully come, found them thus gathered together in faithful expectation; and a mixed multitude of unexpectant spectators also brought together by the providence of God, to witness and to share in this new promulgation of his grace and power to the world.

Mark then the wonderful display which followed; to which the Christian Church has ever referred, as to their grandest fulfilment, the terms of that 68th Psalm which we heard yesterday, and which the Jews also were wont to repeat on their own Pentecost. For neither the march of the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, when the Divine glory first visibly rested upon it,—nor the repetition of that august progress and its accompaniments, when David restored the ark from its long exile, and composed in celebration of it

that sublime Psalm, beginning with the prescribed words of its ancient march in the desert,—neither of these equalled, in sublimity or importance of result, the display of Divine power on this occasion; when God in a more eminent manner refreshed his weary inheritance, by exhibiting his majestic Presence in the midst of them; when “the LORD gave the word, and great was the company of the preachers;” a mixed train, from every tribe of Israel, publishing the wondrous tidings, and heralding forth a new dispensation of religion, in which the Morians’ land, the heathen people and their princes, should stretch out their hands in willing submission to their God. The hills of Basan, at the termination of the first march across the desert, are invoked by the Psalmist to submit to the yet more glorious mount of Sion, on which the ark of God’s glory was to be fixed, as its place of abiding rest: but what was the hill to which God thus magnificently ascended as his representative abode, compared to that heaven of heavens which received the LORD of Glory on his ascent from the scene of his victorious conflict, and from which at the right hand of his Father, He dispenses the spoils of his victory,—the gifts even for the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell among them¹? The full realization of these prophetic words of the Psalm, is surely to be found there only where St Paul has instructed us to find it; in that mission of the Spirit from the Father by the ascended and glorified Son, of which the first example was on this season,—to give apostles

¹ Num. x. 35; Ps. lxxviii. 1, 7, 16, 17, 18, &c; Eph. iv. 8—12.

and prophets and pastors and teachers to his Church. When the rushing mighty wind filled the place where the apostles and their band of little more than one hundred persons were sitting, and in the face of a multitude of many thousands, this band, hitherto so timid and so ignorant, so unable to plead in any case without the Saviour at hand directing them, now appeared gifted with new and strange powers of utterance, declaring in various tongues the greatness and goodness and wonderful works of God to that promiscuous multitude,—neither the circumstance itself, nor its undeniable results, will permit us to doubt of the Power from which this flowed. We hear the question of the Jews of the dispersion, each one recognizing in their speech the language of the heathen country in which he was usually resident: “Behold, are not these men which speak Galileans?”—not merely men of Palestine, a country of which every part was most remote from Spain and Libya, or even from Greece and Italy, but men of an inferior northern province of Palestine, far away from all the cities of Judæa, to which strangers from those distant countries would ever think of proceeding,—men who it might be expected could speak no other language than the Aramæan dialect, then generally spoken throughout the sacred territory, and who spoke even that with such a rustic provincial accent, and uncouth choice of words, as at once to betray to the urban Jews the quarter from which they came, as we read in several places of the Gospels. Well might it ex-

cite wonder that persons like these, unlearned and simple men as they notoriously were, should speak to the several stranger Jews the far different languages of their adopted countries, and that with the ease and fluency and correctness of a native or long resident of these regions. Yet the sure reality of the wonder is seen in its first recorded and most undeniable result, the conversion on that day of three thousand souls to the faith; a number greater than that which our Lord's own preaching had converted, yet itself but the prelude of the far greater multitudes which from that time forward, as all history testifies, flocked to the standard of the Cross. In this first effusion of power on the infant Church do we not see, as in one symbolic exhibition, the influence which ever after enabled the heralds of the Gospel—not only at Jerusalem, but throughout all those parts of the world,—not only to Jews of the dispersion, but to Gentiles themselves amongst whom they sojourned,—to propagate with success the wonderful facts with which they were charged: the unheard-of history of One who was crucified, yet was the ever-living Saviour of mankind—of One who once descended from the bosom of the Father to bring salvation to the world, and who now re-ascending to Him after that work was accomplished,—dispensed by his Spirit the means of illumination and conversion to all. And have we not here the symbols of a remedial power commensurate to the evil of man's separation from God and his fellow-creatures? There are few things in the present condition of humanity,

which more strikingly signify the alienation of man from man, than the diversities of language in different nations; a diversity which in a great measure defeats the purpose of the entire community of nature and faculties, and destroys their power of communication with each other, in a manner of which we have no analogous example in any other race of animated beings, of like nature and faculties. This barrier, which nothing but long study and practice can enable the best educated to overcome even in the least degree, while for the most part it is not surmounted at all,—this mighty barrier is here shewn surmountable by the reconciling grace of God. The mad discord of Babel is overruled by the harmony of Jerusalem's Pentecost, when man's distempered ambition is confronted by the kingdom of the Crucified; whose first commissioned heralds in various tongues, but with common heart and spiritual intelligence, proclaim the presence of their common Father and Redeemer.

But the gift of tongues was but one of many extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to which St Peter must here be understood to allude; which the early Church possessed, and the apostles intimate as being in constant exercise among the communities to which they write. It is notorious, moreover, that the first witnesses and preachers of Christianity who are said to have dispensed these gifts, and through them converted multitudes, first of Jews and afterwards of Gentiles, to the faith of Christ, were men, who from fortune and station and character were the least likely, on any natural principle

that can be imagined, to conceive an enterprize of this nature, much less to succeed in it, as they unquestionably did. We know also that the doctrine they taught of a crucified Lord and God was most opposed to any sentiment that could naturally gain admittance to the mind of a heathen, whether learned or unlearned; and that it was certainly no less opposed to what was then, and is still, the cherished national expectation of the Jew. Yet by such instruments and by such doctrines as these was the civilized world converted, against all the influence of those strongly opposed principles, when wielded by all the powers of the earth: and after four centuries of conflict the powers of the earth were overcome themselves, and made to assume that character of supporters and establishers of the faith once persecuted, which is now borne by the rulers of the most civilized portion of mankind. And if these things be so,—if these men, possessed of no arms but penitence and meek endurance against the malice and the power arrayed to crush them, exhibited from the first Pentecost downward a course of invincible fortitude, zeal, and constancy, with gentleness, meekness, and charity, such as no records but those of Christianity could ever furnish,—if this be the case, as all the monuments of history testify, then can there be any account given of these men's conduct and success, but their own,—viz. that they were in all this guided, supported, and aided by the extraordinary grace of God? The wit of man may be safely defied to give any account of the matter that will approve itself to impartial

reason, other than that which these men have given of themselves. They have told us in the gospels fully of their own natural imperfections: with a candid frankness which we cannot mistake, they have acquainted us with their timidity and ignorance, their carnal and earthly views before this period: for the high superiority of their subsequent character, which reformed and regenerated the world, they refer solely to the heavenly gift of the Father, which Christ had promised and obtained for them, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here therefore I would close the historical view of the declaration of my text. I proceed to detail briefly the doctrine, equally applicable to all times and seasons of the Church, which the event of this season suggests to us: first, as it relates to the person of the Holy Ghost; secondly, to the office sustained by Him in the Church and in the divinely-appointed economy of human salvation.

And first, for the person of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, the Lord and the Giver of life. Far more does it become the profound reverence and awe with which His Divine Majesty should inspire us, to receive humbly what is delivered to us from the sources of eternal truth, than curiously to enquire or debate concerning it,—or to rebuke, otherwise that with meekness and fear, the errors which human perverseness here throws in our way. To receive the mysteries of faith, without any technicalities of language or express definitions against error, was the peculiar felicity of the earliest ages, before these noxious errors sprang up:

our own wisdom and happiness consists in receiving simply and thankfully that form of sound words in which we have been instructed, by which the Church has carefully guarded and transmitted the truth which she received from the beginning. Thus we believe and confess the Holy Ghost in the third Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity, proceeding from the Father through His only-begotten Son our Lord, and with the Father and the Son together worshipped and glorified, as one God, world without end. As the Christian opens his mind to the truths thus transmitted to him, their coincidence in every part with Holy Scripture, and the impossibility of questioning or departing from them without departing also from Scripture, will assuredly appear to his careful study and meditation.

For, do we need proof that the Holy Ghost is true God, of the same essence and undivided Deity with the Father and the Son,—consequently infinitely removed above all created spirits, of men or of angels, even of the highest archangel?—hear the words of St Paul : “What man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man that is in him? EVEN so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God :” and hear St Peter declaring in like manner that he who lies or prevaricates to the Holy Ghost, lieth not to man, but to God. Or do we require proof that He who is thus intimately and inseparably present in the essence of the Deity, is no mere function, power, or attribute, (as some have ventured to teach), but a distinct Person of the

Godhead? We find the clear marks of this also, if we attend to them, in the words of Scripture. For as the Word, the expressed Intelligence of the Father, the Image of his invisible essence and glory, is yet no mere attribute, as the human analogy might have led us to suppose, but a Person, proved to be such by being represented as the only-begotten Son,—subsisting from eternity *with* the Father, as well as in the Father, and moreover manifested thus to man in time, by being made flesh and dwelling amongst us, and thence returning to the Father, whom He ever addressed and recognized as distinct in personality from Himself; even so, though by a necessarily less palpable evidence, is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, clearly proved to be no attribute of either, but a Person equally with both. As it was the Son, and not the Father, who became man, and as man lived and died for us,—so was it the Spirit, and not the Father, who descended as a dove on the Incarnate Son at his baptism; when a voice was heard, the voice as of the Father from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This Holy Spirit is subsequently said to be sent by the Father in the Son’s name,—to be sent also by the Son from the Father; He is the *other* Comforter, who, proceeding from the Father, is to supply the Son’s place in a more intimate and abiding manner with mankind,—to take of the things of Christ, to shew them and apply them to us; and, to sum up in one single sentence the proof of a personality distinct from that of the Father and

of the Son, which all these representations intimate, He is joined to them, distinctly yet inseparably, in that most sacred form of Christ's ordinance by which we were made Christians: in the sacred waters wherein we were born anew into the household of faith and blessedness, we were consigned with equal devotion to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And what Christian who duly considers that act of consecration which translated him to the kingdom of grace and the inheritance of glory, can doubt that the Holy Ghost is a person equally with the Father and the Son? that like them He is God, and in Deity one with them? None surely who complies thus with the faith of the Universal Church, and the sure marks of holiness attending its possession; who considers moreover that, while blasphemy against the Eternal Son, the image of the Invisible Supreme, is declared pardonable, the mysterious blasphemy against this Divine person, though co-equal, who is the Godhead himself within us, seeking and striving for our renewal and sanctification,—this blasphemy is declared as having no forgiveness, either in this world or in the next. The conclusion is surely to regard with holy worship that unseen but ever-present Object, whose joint procession from the Father and the Son, and mutual inhabitation in both, completes the mystery of the Trine and One Deity: to consider the Holy Spirit as a distinct, yet inseparable, object of our love and praise, our thankfulness and religious adoration.

But from the sacred person of the Divine Spirit let us now turn to the office which He condescends to sustain, as the promised Paraclete, in the economy of human salvation. The promise referred to in my text by St Peter is reiterated in various forms in the later chapters of St John's Gospel: it implies that the Spirit should lead the disciples into all truth, not by revealing a new body of faith or doctrine, but by impressing Christ's words and works on their awakened memories, and opening their minds and hearts to understand and to apply them; that He should dwell in them as an ever-living spring of holiness, power, and eternal life; and that in and through them He should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. We have already seen, in part, how illustriously this promise was fulfilled in the first disciples; the proof that under this guidance they afforded of the innocence and majesty of their crucified and risen Lord, and of the inexcusable wickedness of the impenitent rejectors of His mercy. But does this promise and testimony cease with them? Or, because the miraculous agency has now ceased, agreeably to the usual order of Divine Providence, to leave what was thus first established to the intrinsic force which its abiding memorials contain,—are we therefore to think that his internal and quickening operation at an end, which constitutes, indeed, to the attentive mind, the greatest wonder of the first Christian Pentecost? Surely not. In the same respect in which the Spirit was required to illuminate, to confirm, and sanctify the first

inspired witnesses of Christ's resurrection, it is declared in the most solemn terms, that the same Spirit should abide with them *for ever*; words which have no verification, except as applying to the whole body of which they were the chosen representatives, the Church built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, whom the abiding Spirit should lead into all truth, and preserve from Satan's power for evermore. St Peter, in the discourse now before us, when assuring his conscience-stricken hearers that if they repented and were baptized they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, adds, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call:" thus distinctly announcing, that this promised gift of the Father was both a universal and a permanent one, commensurate in extent and duration with the whole Christian vocation. His gifts of peace and love, of knowledge and truth,—gifts equally necessary in every age and clime,—should be poured abundantly on all by whom that divine call should be heard and believingly embraced. Surely therefore as the baptismal grace enables us to appropriate the great Intercessor without us, the Incarnate Son, who took our nature on him, and having borne our sins, is now exalted on our behalf at the right hand of the Majesty on High,—so surely does the same grace supply us with our internal Intercessor, the Eternal Paraclete, through whose inhabitation we are brought nigh through the Son to the Father,

by whom the Father and the Son make their abode within us; who renews the Divine Presence which the first transgression had lost to mankind; who helps the infirmity of our faltering and uncertain petitions; who repairs the breaches of the fall within us, and, in the language of our Communion Office, cleanses the thoughts of our hearts by his inspiration, that we may perfectly love God, and worthily magnify Him in his Church on earth, in order that we may be fitted for his reign of glory hereafter.

Such then is the ultimate object of our meditation on this great anniversary, when beholding the light and wisdom and power which then through the Apostles descended on the Universal Church. When St Paul is comparing together the two objects which the Jewish and the Christian Pentecosts respectively commemorate,—I mean the giving of the Law, and the spiritual announcement of the Gospel,—he says: “If the ministration of death, written and engraven upon stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory should be done away, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?” The law of God, though holy and just and true,—yet if written on stones only, that is, only in the outward precept and penalty, is no other than the ministration of death: it is so, not from any defect or fault of its own, but from the depth of sinfulness in

man, which this mere outward presentation cannot cure, or rather, which it irritates instead of removing: it is "the letter which killeth," as the Apostle there declares; or, as he writes to the Romans, it causes sin to revive by the opposition it makes manifest between his inclination and his duty, and while it convicts, it slays the miserable sinner. It is the Spirit alone that gives life, the Spirit whose gifts we now commemorate, who writes the law of God after another manner, on the fleshly tables of man's heart: and without abating in the least either the holiness of that law or its obligation,—nay, displaying each in far greater perfection in the person of that immaculate Son of Man, who alone perfectly satisfied it,—conveys through Him the gift of pardon in order to cleansing grace, and disposes the heart to conformity with that Divine Exemplar. Thus, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," says St Paul, "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." And this is indeed the great, the distinguishing blessing of the evangelical dispensation: it is not that holiness and good works are less exacted than before, for they are more so: our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of them of old, if we would enter into heaven: but our great and blessed privilege is this, that the Gospel covenant gives what it exacts: the grace of Christ is dispensed through all the channels of his mercy, to enable us to the performance of

all the high duty He requires of us; the Holy Spirit is bestowed on all who in Christ's name invoke the Father.

Let us then, in conclusion, mark the high and fearful dignity which is thus conferred on our Christian calling. For if the office of our baptism be not an awful sacrilege, or a profane mockery, such is indeed the relation in which it places us all to the inhabiting Spirit of truth; a relation most blessed as well as glorious, if its privilege be valued and used,—but most awful, most redounding to aggravated condemnation, if abused or neglected. If we live in the Spirit,—which, as St Paul tells the Galatians, was the case with all who had been baptized, and thus put on Christ,—then we must, as he directs, walk in that Spirit, or else we incur the character of apostates: we must pursue the will of God, which is our sanctification, through the means of that blessed Spirit, who, if we slight and grieve Him, may withdraw his gracious influences, and become our enemy. The fact that it is not to our inherent power, but to a Divine Agent within, that we must owe our advance in virtue and meetness for heaven, is not one to fill us with security, but with awe and solicitude: for this is St Paul's use of the doctrine; "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," he says to the Philippians; and why? "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The act of working your own salvation must be in an important sense yours; for so it is distinctly stated in the Apostle's address: but pursue it not with easy self-

confidence, as if the power by which you worked were also yours; a power which you might leave unexerted at one time, and resume at another, according to your own pleasure. Remember, says the Apostle, that such is not the case with you; let the awful consideration be ever with you, that the power by which alone you discern what is good, or can pursue and embrace it when discerned, is the power of a Divine Inmate lodged in your inmost spirit; One who works after his own pleasure, not your will; and whom your pride, your ingratitude, your uncharitableness or perverseness, may chill and grieve and alienate. Were this belief well fixed in the ground of our hearts, far removed should we be from the error of those who make mere correctness of outward demeanour the sum of the moral attainment to which they aspire: equally removed, on the other hand, from the most irreverent estimation of the Divine Comforter, which thinks to measure his presence in the heart by sensible or direct excitations of imagination or feeling; and, in a hurtful straining after these, misplaces the proper business of religion. Were this belief, I say, deeply fixed in our hearts, of the great mercy involved in our Christian calling, and the Divine Agent by whom alone we pursue and realize it, it would produce in us truer ideas as well of sanctification as of its Author: it would generate that deep reverence, mingled with love and gratitude,—that elevation of spirit accompanied with the most chastened sobriety,—that union of humility with firmness,—of faith in God with suspicion of ourselves,—of hope

with watchful obedience, of zeal with fervent charity,—of superiority to the world, with the consciousness of unity of spirit with Christ's Church Universal,—which ever characterizes the true household and family of faith, and by which the spirit that animates them is distinguished from every false or erratic or debased one. A character which, wherever fully impressed on the Church, in such proportion as it was impressed as on this day at the first, would present a collective front of majesty and beauty and glory, before which the powers of darkness and error would quail, as did the thrones of heathen superstition and abomination of old, when this wonder first proceeded from the mountain of his holiness: "Lo, the kings of the earth are gathered and gone by together. They marvelled to see such things; they were astonished, and suddenly cast down."

And are not then the further words of our first Pentecost Psalm such as we may even now dare to appropriate? "Like as we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God; God upholdeth the same for ever. We wait for thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple....Walk about Sion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks, set up her houses, that ye may tell them that come after. For this God is our God for ever and ever." As then we daily pray that God's kingdom may come in the world, so let us pray for the removal of all those obstacles that interfere with our full appropriation of these

divine words,—all that prevents our realizing that unity of God's Church in its actual edifice of order and strength, without which the light of His glorious Majesty can never be duly felt, nor truly reflected from us on the dark world. Let us pray for the removal of all suspicions, all narrowness of spirit, all contempt for others older, wiser and holier than ourselves; all disposition to seek the gifts of the Spirit otherwise than in those channels through which they were first dispensed to mankind; and which however for our sins they may appear closed or extinct, yet by His breath may they be quickened afresh who first breathed into the Apostles after his resurrection the Spirit of his own immortal life. Thus may schisms and scandals disappear from those who recognize no empty forms, as Christ has instituted none,—but see Christ and his life-giving Spirit in all. For “there is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free.” “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” May that unity which Christ bequeathed be once more the cherished portion of his family on earth; sighed for where it is not attained; its absence not slurred over and apologized for, but sincerely regretted and lamented; its return

sought not by self-chosen methods of modern wisdom, but the ancient ways of his appointment; the ordinances of ecclesiastical unity which first held the body together, and have, even in the worst of times, kept his heritage from utter confusion.

SERMON XIX.

CONFIDENCE TOWARDS GOD.

(Preached at St Mary's on the Second Sunday after Trinity, June 16, 1844.)

1 JOHN III. 21—24.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

THE morning epistle of which these words are the close, relates to the subject of a good conscience; the means by which under the covenant of grace it is attained and secured, with the great blessings attendant on its possession. No subject is of greater importance to the individual Christian than this: and well does its special consideration follow thus directly on the complete series of revealed truth which from Advent to Pentecost has been successively presented to us: when having traced the progress of redeeming mercy, from its first dawning commencement to the last crowning gift of the Father,—we end by contemplating these mys-

teries of grace in their adorable Source, the One God in Three Persons—of whom, and through whom, and by whom, they are ours.

What, then, on this momentous personal subject, is the testimony of the Evangelist and Apostle St John, the beloved disciple of his Lord,—to whom, beyond all others, it was given to discern most clearly, to disclose most fully to men, the mysteries which he had seen and heard from the Incarnate Truth? The passage just read answers this question. Having told us, in the outset of this day's Epistle, that the end and essence of our divine religion was love to the brethren,—love not terminated in words or mere emotions, but in the deeds of self-denying beneficence,—a love reflecting that infinite love of God, whereby He laid down his life for us, by laying down a portion of our life, our worldly substance, for the necessities of others,—he observes, that if we thus carry out into act the principle of heavenly charity, "*hereby* we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For, if our heart condemn us," if our conscience convict us of wilful failures here, much more must God convict; since "God is greater than our hearts;"—He that planted the ear must hear, He that formed the eye must see, infinitely beyond the hearing or the sight of man; He that teacheth man knowledge, He that endued him with this power of self-inspection and self-condemnation, much more must He judge and punish: He "knoweth all things. But if our hearts condemn us not,"—if our conscience enlightened

by his truth assure us of our substantial integrity in this respect, "then have we confidence towards God;" a confidence, proportionate to our obedience, that our prayers, rightly directed to the throne of mercy, will be heard and unfailingly answered. The commandment to which this obedience is due, is summed up, as he then observes, in believing in the Name of the Son of God, and following his law of charity to mankind. Thus, and thus only, do we dwell in Him and He in us; in this have we the earnest of the Spirit, that certifies of our membership in Him, and our final salvation. Let it then be our concern at present to examine the Apostolic testimony more in detail: as it relates, first, to our general duty as Christians; secondly, to the acceptableness of our prayers at the throne of grace; finally, to our peace and hope and confidence in God.

Now with respect to our general duty as Christians,—no testimony can be more direct than that of St John, to shew that it is comprised under two great heads, a right belief and a right practice: it is to embrace with real credence the objects which the revelation of God has opened to our mental perception, and to pursue this intellectual assent into the love which fulfils the commandments. Thus faith and obedience—not as detached or unmixed ingredients, but vitally linked together by the love that makes them one,—constitute the whole duty of the Christian man. If the Apostle do not prefix to faith and obedience that which is the joint preliminary with faith in those who approach

the Gospel from without,—and which to those within is still necessary so long as there remains a body of sin,—I mean repentance,—it is simply from the point of view in which he regards the Christian state: for dwelling as he does in the higher light of God, he beholds the regenerate condition as that in which sin is ever vanquished, and the fear which hath torment, and which must be ever proportional to the sin, giving place evermore to that perfect love which casteth out fear. Yet is not the consideration of this wholly absent from St John's mind, even as belonging to the estate of a Christian. For amidst all his strong declarations that “he who is born of God sinneth not;” that such is the essential character of the new nature of which we are partakers,—the new man which on the ruins of the old must be reared up and formed and matured within us,—still St John does not, more than the other Apostles, bid us presume the perfect attainment of this at once, or challenge assurance on such presumption: he declares, on the contrary, that “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins,” if there be a perpetual recognition of, and sorrow for, that evil which stands in the way of our blissful perfection, and unclouded converse with God, then is God not merely merciful,—“He is *faithful and just*—to forgive us our sins;” and not only to remit the penalty, but “to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The blood which was once shed for sin,—the intercession of Him who once died, and is now at God's

right hand in glory,—avails still and for ever to those who pursue the path He has enjoined them; who so walk in the light, as He is in the light, that they may have fellowship with Him, and mutual fellowship also with the whole Church and family of the redeemed.

The concern of the individual Christian is, therefore, on this apostolical view, most clear and express. Admitted as he is by the sacrament of regeneration to that holy relation with God as his Father, which the Son's mediation has purchased, and the Spirit applies to the members of his mystical body,—his single object in life, with the aids thus divinely supplied him, is to observe the precepts of his Master, to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God. And if this truth is ever important to be observed, that we may understand aright the objects to which our religious thoughts and endeavours must be directed,—that we neither neglect our means, nor mistake means for ends, nor in any way decline from the strait path prescribed to us; its consideration surely is not the less important to be pressed, if, under prevalent confusions of thought, men are now induced to oppose and contrast things of which the Apostle asserts the harmony or identity. How many are there who if they had read in any other writing than inspired Scripture the statement, that the way to assure our hearts before God is to take heed that our love to others be practically beneficent,—or that we obtain our petitions from God *because* we keep his commandments, and do those things which

are well pleasing in his sight,—would have felt a suspicion of these terms, and a desire to qualify them? Are there not some by whom such statements of the effects of obedience, in the books called Apocrypha, are cited as proofs how ill bestowed is the Church's veneration for those writings,—who, if they find them in the Fathers of the Church, produce them as evincing the darkness of ancient Christianity as to evangelic truth,—who, when they find them in what is more under their control, a tract or writing which our good forefathers have circulated, are even clamorous for expunging the passage or neutralizing it? And where there is not this express hostility directed against the current language of the Church of Christ in all ages, yet how commonly is it seen that good men will scarcely venture on exhortations to that holiness and obedience which they most sincerely desire to be practised by themselves and others, without appending to the exhortation a serious caution, not to imagine that we are by *these* means assuring our hearts before God,—or that God hears our prayers *because* we are obedient? I make not these observations as condemning the spirit or disposition, often a sincere and humble one, which to their mind dictates cautions like these. I mention them to shew, by the contrast of my text, how little account the Holy Spirit has made of the methods by which these men's really pious objects are thought to be secured; to shew that God has by very different methods guarded against the subtle evils of self-confidence and spiritual pride; that the matter of these cau-

tions is in fact misplaced; the whole mode of thought which makes such opposition between the ideas of faith and obedience, being most alien from the mind of apostles and evangelists. What we read of the efficacy of pious works in the extra-canonical books of Tobit or Ecclesiasticus, we read no less distinctly stated in the inspired pages of David and Isaiah and Daniel: in the writings of the Apostles, as well as those of the uninspired lights of the Church since their time, the spiritual obedience of the Christian is placed not as contrasted with the grace of Christ, but exhibiting it,—not as impairing its supremacy, but illustrating and magnifying it.

There is, happily, one proposition or formula to which none of our brethren will hesitate to express the fullest assent: viz. that obedience is necessary to salvation, as the evidence of the faith which justifies. And this is most important truth; as is also that more fundamental truth of which it is a manifestation—that it is not for the merit of anything in ourselves, whether of belief or work, but for the infinite merits of the Incarnate Son, that the gifts of grace are bestowed upon us here, and the prize of glory hereafter. To say then that Christian works and obedience are a proof and evidence that the faith from which they spring is sound and justifying,—is to utter a most salutary truth; but if it be further urged that no other representation of the relative positions of faith and obedience is admissible beside this one,—there is not only in this a most unwarranted restriction on the language of

the people of God, but a great danger likewise, while impeaching the language, of impeaching also the doctrine of Scripture. Good fruit evidences the goodness of the tree from which it grows: a solid and durable house evidences the stability and firmness of the foundation on which it is built: but who would therefore say that the house is of no use but to evince the goodness of its foundation,—the fruit of no value but to shew that there is a sound root at the bottom? Would not the common sense of mankind reclaim that rather it was for the sake of the house that the foundation was laid,—that it was solely to secure good fruit that the good tree was planted in the earth? And just so do right reason and Scripture meet the observation, that because true faith is tested by charity and obedience, therefore charity and obedience have no value but as testing the reality of faith, as if this were intrinsically more important than they. For none of the sacred writers have ever observed such cautious language as this. Not St Paul; for he makes charity, which is the crown and summit, of higher esteem than the faith which works by it. Not St James; by whom charity and purity are represented not barely as evidencing our religion, but as constituting it. Not St Peter; who speaks of adding to our faith virtue, and the several other virtues whose crown is charity, in order that *by* their being in us and abounding, we may secure our calling and election in Christ. Not St John; whose whole writings are as express as my text in making the keeping of Christ's commandments not the mere

test or consequence, but the very being and essence of our abiding in Him as our Saviour. Not, finally, that Lord and Saviour Himself; whose own words on this subject are the foundation of those of his favoured disciple; who describes Himself as the vine and us as the branches; who represents our abiding in Him and our bearing fruit of righteousness as things in their nature inseparable; inseparable as are, on the other hand, the disobedience and the unbelief, whereby it is too possible for us to become withered branches, and after much long-sufferance, yet finally to be cut off from the living tree and burned.

There is therefore no difficulty, if the whole testimony of God be observed, in obtaining the true point of view which unites the duty of a Christian, in its complex notion of faith and obedience, with the life-giving grace of the Gospel. It is only a narrow and defective view of that grace which suggests the least imagination of inconsistency here. For, as without Christ we can do nothing, the reference to Him of our salvation, from first to last, is as entire on this scheme as on any which the wildest Antinomianism would substitute for it. Without the sanctification of our humanity in His incarnate Divine person, who has borne and expiated our sins, no means could we have of doing what is well-pleasing in God's sight; while the power of so doing is solely from our engrafting into Him by virtue of the imparted Spirit. "Hereby," continues St John, "we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit that He hath

given us:" and the presence and operation of that Spirit appears not in audible whispers or violent excitements, but in the fruits which He alone engenders, the fruits of purity, justice, and love. Vain, therefore, is it to separate even in thought what the Gospel not only connects, but identifies. Vain and untrue is it to disparage the works of the Christian life by terming them works of the law, as though there were any place of Scripture which so vilified them: an error usually accompanied by another of kindred nature, that of disparaging the appointed means and channels through which proceed the grace of our engrafting into Christ, and our edification in Him. For thus we learn to consider believers as each insulated individuals, brought separately by arbitrary methods from the mass of perdition: whereas their condition, as redeemed from that state, is ever represented otherwise in the New Testament; they are described as component parts of a great building fitly framed together, a holy temple in the Lord,—in which true Christians, as lively stones, are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

But from this view of the Christian's general duty, the faith and obedience of his holy calling, let us turn to that which in St John's description is most prominent, his prayers: the prayers which, as one of a holy priesthood, he is privileged to offer, and ever, while thus faithfully occupied, in sure hope of their being heard and answered. The breath of that Spirit whereby we are incorporated into Christ is indeed no other than prayer: that

Spirit helping our infirmities, when of ourselves we know not what to ask, but with groanings unuttered, as St Paul speaks,—with aspirations which the intellectual consciousness has scarcely learnt to fashion into words,—pouring forth the desires of the renovated soul to God. And where should we expect to find this mind of the Spirit, but in that perfect formulary by which Christ ordained that his breathing in the regenerate soul should find expression? The Spirit sent by the Father, the Spirit of his Son, the fruit of that Son's incarnation, is He by whom we cry Abba Father; and from this invocation of God as our Father in heaven, this divine prayer accordingly proceeds; filially desiring, before any mention of selfish or personal desires, that His name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. And when we come to speak of ourselves and our individual wants, it is yet the plural number that we use; thus evincing our consciousness that we are but parts of the one Church and household of faith: and we begin by what is most necessary to our bodies and our souls; the daily bread we need for the one, serving for a symbol to the higher nature of the word and the mysteries which sustain the other,—the living bread which came down from heaven for the life of the world. And when after this the pardon of our daily trespass is called for,—of the sin which, uncanceled, would spread a dark impenetrable cloud between ourselves and our Father in heaven,—our reception of that great blessing which it is for divine mercy

alone to bestow, is not made, as in the modern systems, to depend on analysing our sentiments respecting *it*, or respecting the sacrifice by which Divine mercy has paid our debt,—but solely on our imitation of that mercy in our conduct to others. “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us:” the very formula of our confidence in our Father’s restoring mercy involves as one element our habitual imitation of it in our own poor measure: the forgiveness of the hundred pence to our fellow-servant is the condition, the only expressed condition, on which depends the continued cancel of our debt of ten thousand talents. For thus had God forgiven us at first, when He wiped off our debt of original sin in the laver of regeneration; thus does he continue his forgiveness for actual sins, if we truly repent of them,—explicitly for the known, implicitly for the unknown; praying to know and detest all, and ever evincing our penitence by mercy to our fellow-sinners. Thus loving mercy, and practising while we seek it, we supplicate for the great and indispensable mercies which yet remain,—our preservation from the temptations which endanger us,—our rescue from the ghostly enemy, from all evil and wickedness, and from everlasting death. Thus walking in the light of God, we confidently say “Amen” to our petitions; as not doubting that He with whom is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, will hear and approve and answer.

Is not then the very construction of Christ’s model of prayer the most perfect proof of the

assertion in my text; "Whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are well-pleasing in his sight"? The very test of our soundness as Christians, of the sincerity of our faith and the dispositions that belong to faith, is our heart's accordance with the mould and fashion of this prayer; the ease and naturalness with which our thoughts follow its direction, and approach by degrees to filling up its simple but all-comprehending outline in the expansion of our hearts towards God. Accordingly this prayer contains one explicit profession of regard to God's commandments; it is true, in one point only, that of the forgiveness of injuries,—one too which does not perhaps necessarily in itself include obedience in other points that are likewise indispensable,—yet one which we cannot possibly observe in the spirit indicated by this prayer, without a disposition that will equally proceed to the keeping of every other commandment, and avoiding every snare and temptation. Fitly then is this duty singled out, as the only one of which explicit profession is required in the course of our petition: for while it is a difficult duty to bring the carnal heart to perform, it is that one which is most characteristically the spirit of the Cross of Christ,—the fittest condition, therefore, on which to suspend the application to ourselves of the forgiveness that was there purchased for us. The absence of this spirit of forgiveness annuls the prayer; or, to speak more truly, converts it into an imprecation from God upon ourselves of that hard, unforgiving sen-

tence we pronounce on our own offending brother ; a sentence which will consign us to the adversary from whom the Son of God at such cost procured our ransom, and leave us no escape till we have paid the uttermost farthing, the Divine justice finding us miserable debtors and bondslaves to eternity.

Thus then in the Lord's prayer itself is the condition of acceptable prayer, with its matter, effectually pointed out to us. Elsewhere in this Epistle we read ; " This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desire of Him." Now when both the petitions and the conditions of success are so clearly indicated in the divine outline, no doubt can remain in the true Christian as to the details. If he ask for spiritual blessings, he may ask absolutely, freely, unreservedly, in his Lord's name, with full reliance on that Lord's direction and assurance, that on his faithful perseverance they must be his,—however different may be the mode of their bestowal from that which he may at first have expected. For temporal good he must indeed ask with a distinct reserve ; suspending the desired favour on the understood condition, if it be for God's glory and his own abiding benefit, that the good thing in question should be bestowed or continued. And then there is no doubt, but that the prayer will be efficacious for good ;—whether his heart's desire be obtained, and find him prepared and humbly thankful,—or whether loss, or disappointment, or

sorrow be sent, with their stern discipline, to wear the soul from corrupting vanities, and point where alone its treasure may be securely reposed for eternity. Thus, what we ask we receive of our Father in heaven, as surely as we ask the things that please Him. And He assuredly who formed us from nothing, and redeemed us when we were worse than nothing, knows better than ourselves what is for our abiding welfare: and he will provide for it, while we observe his discipline, most effectually.

Let us now finally mark the bearing of these considerations on that from which they began and in which they terminate, that of a good conscience towards God. "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." The assurance from which in the true Christian discipline the life of righteousness proceeds, is not that which views the eternal prize irrespectively of its conditions, but rests on our admission, by free grace, to a system of means which, if followed, will infallibly lead to salvation. The means are those already pointed out, of faith and prayer: the path is obedience: our confidence and security proportional to the degree in which we find ourselves fixed in this path, and pursuing it. So states St John in my text: and let none disdain this assurance as insufficient for comfort. Let him rather enquire whether such comfort as is needed is not ever afforded by it; and dread lest, in catching at something more immediate and irrespectively, he may not be embracing a delusion for a truth.

Let not in particular any one disdain this rule, because of its apparent coincidence with what ordinary—or even heathen—morality points out. Rather when thus placed in the text in conjunction with the highest Christian mysteries, let us be sure that its connexion with them is most real; and that no apprehension of lower views of our calling can be realized by its observance.

St Paul has said in one place; “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that with simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in this world.” When the Apostle says this, is he deliberately adopting a lower ground of confidence than when he says; “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God”? Undoubtedly not: only what he refers in the latter place to its *Divine Source*, he describes in its *detail* in the former: but his real matter of hope is in both instances precisely the same, the testimony afforded by his irreproachable course of action that he was a subject of the sanctifying grace of God. How then can the sublimity of this last consideration be impaired by the circumstance, that its testimony resolves itself to that of conscience, and thus resembles in its mode that of heathen or any other morals? The heathen who knew God only as the Author of Nature and Providence, might have satisfaction—indeed he ought to have it,—in proportion as his conduct virtuously accorded with the true course of nature and providential dispensations. Here was at least

some hope that God, who left not Himself without witness to any in the bounties of earth and heaven, might be conducting him amidst the dreariness of the moral scene around him; though of its course and issues he was as ignorant as of the degree of the Divine operations within him or on his behalf. The Jew had a far better stay to support him, while conscious of dutifully obeying the sanctions of that law which was his tutor and schoolmaster: the hope afforded by the great promise to the father of the faithful, that he was thus interested in the coming redemption, though of its means and nature he was at the best but dimly enlightened. But how superior to both is the self-review of the Christian, however in detail of acts entirely similar! who in every instance where the result is satisfactory, sees not only the appeased requisition of an outward law whose sentence is death to the disobedient, but a proof that a Divine Agent is guiding him, is strengthening and fixing his abode within him, and conforming him to the image of the Incarnate Son of God. Will not this impart a character to his self-examination, which neither heathen nor Jew could know, even that which these sentences of the beloved disciple breathe and inculcate? If then, pursuing our course in the spirit of our daily prayer, our conscience tells us of victories over evil and attainments of good; if the fruits of the Spirit, temperance, meekness, and faith, mark our daily proceedings; if while scrupulously just to all, we are more apt to forgive and forget the real injuries done to our-

selves ; if amidst the cares and occupations of life, our attachment to religious duty is increasing, and the influence of this world's principles fainter over our speculation and our practice ; if, finally, the charity of Christ our Lord is reflected both on our dispositions and our conduct to all ;—thus may we trust that the judgment we are instructed to form cannot be fallacious,—that it will be confirmed by that God who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.

SERMON XX.

THE HONOUR OF THE HOLY APOSTLES.

(Preached at St Mary's, on St Andrew's Day, November 30, 1844).

LUKE XXII. 28, 29, 30.

Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

IN this sentence our Lord describes the highest honours of that kingdom, which in the verses preceding he had distinguished from all others founded by man. Unlike the four universal empires that had gone before it, which the king of Babylon saw in vision, and the prophet Daniel expounded to him, this kingdom, made without hands, should last for ever: more durable than gold and silver and brass and iron, itself should never be destroyed,—while all others should fall, and be broken to pieces before it. And in its path of advancement and glory, this kingdom of God should be as distinguished from all human predecessors, as in its materials and its perpetuity. Its eternal Sovereign and Founder has here said, that whereas the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they who in the third brazen empire and

others, assumed the name of Evergetæ, or Benefactors, were those who held in their hands the strongest implements of material force and coercion, not so was it to be in the kingdom He was to establish. The nobles and princes and judges of that kingdom were to be formed on the type and model of Him, who, being in the form of God, took on Him the form of a servant,—who came on earth among his own creatures, not to be ministered to, but to minister,—who was among his own followers as one that served,—and ended by offering his life on a cross of ignominy for the ransom of all. Even so were the disciples, who were not greater than their Lord, to attain the highest posts under Him: the chiefest among them was not he who most ambitiously courted pre-eminence, but he who most humbly and perseveringly served the necessities of his brethren. Those twelve especially, who had thus followed Him, who had continued with Him in his trials, are they for whom a kingdom is appointed by the Son of God, even as for the Incarnate Son himself by the Father. To these is it given to eat and drink in his kingdom at that table, of which on earth they had dispensed the blessings in due portions to mankind; to sit on thrones of judgment and authority over the twelve tribes of God's chosen Israel.

The Church of Christ—that great visible society, the city set on a hill that all may behold, the appointed representative of that kingdom which will last for ever in the highest heaven,—has shewn in this and other solemnities, continued from age to

age, how she has ever treasured up and regarded these words of her Eternal Lord. Her great and all-containing object of contemplation is indeed He whose course from this season of Advent till Pentecost she traces ever year by year; first viewing Him in the dawning of his ancient manifestation, containing the germs both of redemption and judgment, and placing his first and second coming thus as it were in conjunction; then celebrating his lowly Nativity and blessed Epiphany to the world; then following Him in his temptations and sufferings, to his atoning Death and burial; thence, in her Easter thanksgiving, beholding Him as her Saviour risen from the dead and alive for evermore, and from the right hand of the Father, whither He has ascended, dispensing the Holy Spirit in his manifold gifts to his household of faith for evermore. But while the Church thus contemplates her living Head in his unapproachable glory, she also assigns the place which He has assigned to his special servants and representatives. Where the Lord has thus displayed the emblems of his familiarity, together with the moral marks of faith and patience, through which it was attained, the Church recognizes these as marks of glory no less than of goodness: she venerates and hallows their memory accordingly. And in her worship, of which the object is but One, as our noble morning hymn expresses, the Thrice Holy Lord God of Sabaoth, whom the hosts of heaven adore,—while the Holy Church throughout all the world is introduced as paying the united homage of the king-

dom with ourselves, the several high ranks of the kingdom are first enumerated: the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the white-robed army of Martyrs, are foremost in that adoring confession. And this they are described as performing, not barely in time past, as we do now, but even now with us; encompassing us as a cloud of witnesses in our daily walk and service, and swelling the chorus of our acknowledgement.

This is indeed a great truth of Christianity, of which each Saint's day especially reminds us. Almighty God, who has knit together his elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, has appointed, as a necessary consequence and proof of that unity, a sympathy of each one part with every other: if one member suffer, the whole suffer with it: the scandals that afflict, the schisms that rend one part, are felt, in proportion to the general vital soundness, as grievances and sharp wounds throughout: while, on the other hand, whatever of act or suffering bears in any part the impress of God's Holy Spirit, redounds by a mysterious process to the benefit of all the rest. If then this is the case with the Church militant here on earth,—where no member can say of any other, however different in vocation or talent, that he has no need of that other,—is this band of sympathy broken with that happy portion which has passed the barrier now thinly dividing the seen from the unseen world? Must it not rather be exalted and perfected by

their transfer into a state where the sins and disorders that impeded the free exercise of that holy sympathy here are now washed away? Assuredly they feel more truly with the difficulties of those yet in the flesh, from their partaking more thoroughly of the mind of Christ, who in his glorified humanity is Himself not untouched with the same. Thus the spirits of the martyrs, whom St John saw in vision, cry from beneath the altar for the furtherance of the cause in which they died, and for which their brethren left behind still labour. And therefore the "spirits and souls of the righteous" are included in the general invocation we make to all things above and around us, to join us in praising and magnifying the one God in whom we all live. Such then as is the Church's language in both her morning canticles respecting the union of the departed with us in worship,—such is and ever must be her language and sentiment. It belonged to the obscurity of the old dispensation to say, "The dead praise not thee, O God, neither all they that go down into silence"; though this is immediately with implicit faith denied to be the case for ever with those who are the true Israel of God. But since Christ died and rose again, we talk not of our brethren in Christian language as dead, but as falling asleep and resting in Him: much less do we talk of his glorious saints and confessors as dead men and women, as some men now profanely and foolishly speak, when they think to speak religiously. For, as God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and the souls of the ancient patriarchs

ever live in his sight,—much more is this true of those, the least of whom is greater than the greatest of old,—the saints whose death in his sight is more eminently precious,—in whom the light of his grace and truth were reflected, grace for grace, and represented to the faith of all generations. These therefore, and the holy Apostles above all who were with Christ in his temptations, have been from the very first commemorated with special honour by the Church: and while on the anniversaries of their martyrdoms, their natal days of immortality, she seeks to light her fires from the same source that maintained theirs, and made them, in spite of human weakness, more than conquerors, never did she suffer it to be forgotten that it was through the Cross that they attained their crown; and that we honour their memories, not by vain eulogies, or by garnishing their sepulchres, but by marking and imitating their virtues.

Let us then pass from the considerations which are common to all Saints,—at least to all the holy Apostles of Jesus Christ,—to those which are peculiar to him whose memory the Church celebrates on this day. Of St Andrew little is known compared with what might, on human principles, be expected of one so remarkably placed in the first rank of the regenerators of the world: but what we do hear is interesting and instructive, and may lead us to see a happy suitableness in that position of the traditional day of his martyrdom which makes him the first commemorated saint of the ecclesiastical year. The three first historical gospels would

not indeed supply this : for though all mention him as the brother of St Peter, prince of the Apostles, and as called together with him by our Lord from their occupation as fishermen on the lake of Genesareth,—he is never so placed co-ordinately with his brother, as the two similarly called brothers, the sons of Zebedee, are placed with respect to each other. To the pre-eminent honour of these three apostles, Peter, and James, and John, and their more peculiar intimacy with their Lord, Andrew is not admitted; and but for St John's first chapter, we might not have seen anything to distinguish him very markedly among the twelve. But the beloved disciple has there opened a new and untold page of Christian history : that call in Galilee was not the first introduction of either brother to the knowledge of the Saviour; they had known Him some time before in the plain of Jordan; and here it was Andrew that first introduced his more distinguished brother to Jesus Christ, and was himself, in all probability, the first of all the Apostles that heard and believed his word.

The venerable John Baptist was standing near the river Jordan with two of his disciples, of whom one was Andrew, when Jesus, whom he had lately baptized there, passed by. And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The exclamation was but an imperfect repetition of that on the day preceding, when he had spoken of Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and emphatically repeated the testimony at the baptism, that

this was He who should come after him, and should baptize with the Holy Ghost. But the exclamation, short as it was in this instance, sank deep into the mind of Andrew and the other disciple of John that was with him. Little could they then be aware of the full import of that memorable title, even to the degree in which the Baptist was privileged to understand it: little indeed could they conceive of all we know to be implied in the realization of the Paschal type in Christ's person; that He was the immaculate Lamb, whose blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and alone makes reconciliation for human sin; and that the memorials of that spotless sacrifice, partaken with Eucharistic solemnity by the faithful, should be their nutriment in holiness and unity of faith to the world's end. Yet they are arrested by the expression, and by the deportment of Him to whom it was applied: and they leave the side of John to seek acquaintance with Jesus. The Saviour hears their enquiry, where is his habitation, and invites them to it: thither they with ready curiosity follow him, and abide with him for the whole of that day: and if, as is most probable, the time throughout that fourth Gospel is measured after the Macedonian manner, as used in Ephesus, not after that of the Jews or of the Romans, this will imply that they staid with our Lord from ten in the forenoon till evening. Be this however as it may, whether it were eight hours or but two that they employed in gathering from the lips of the Incarnate Truth instructions con-

cerning which it were presumption to offer any imagination or conjecture, the result, with respect to Andrew at least, sufficiently witnesses the affection with which that instruction was received, and the deep conviction which it inspired. He hastens to communicate to his brother Simon the welcome discovery, that the Christ, the Anointed Son of David and Redeemer of Israel, had been found in the person of the stranger whom John had pointed out: Simon is accordingly conducted by Andrew to the Saviour, who exemplifies his omniscience by at once telling him the name and patronymic title, Simon Bar Jona, by which he was then known to his acquaintance, and the far more celebrated name, Cephas, Peter, or the Rock, by which he should be known to all men hereafter: though the actual conferring of that name by himself, and the indication of its pregnant meaning in the foundation of the Church, was reserved for an after time and a more explicit confession.

The transmission of truth at this time to those who should be Apostles hereafter, was not confined to those brothers: it passed next to Philip, who "was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter," and to whom their conviction was most probably the preliminary motive to his own enquiry; and he communicated it to Nathanael, the "Israelite without guile." All these however return from the plain of Jordan to Galilee, and to their usual occupations: but well may we conceive the impression made on the minds of the brothers by the interview, and the manner in which they were thus

prepared for the call they afterwards received. Christ passing by the lake of Gennesareth calls them from their nets to become fishers of men, and to attend henceforth entirely upon Him; a miraculous draught of fishes having both certified to them the divine power of Him whose call they received, and symbolized the innumerable multitudes who by their zealous exertions—Divine power working in them and with them—should be gathered into the net of Christ's Holy Catholic Church. The name of Andrew occurs subsequently in connexion with that symbolic miracle, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed the assembled multitudes; and again when introducing to Jesus in the temple the foreign worshippers who wished to see him, and heard the prediction of his crucifixion and resurrection from death, when by the power of his sacrifice He should draw all men to Him, and cast out the prince of this world.

The low Judaical conceptions that had before possessed the Apostles were dissipated from the mind of Andrew as from the rest, when, after the conquest of death and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, a conquest to which all earthly ones were mean and insignificant,—the Holy Ghost was sent to stamp these truths in their full meaning on their hearts, and to be an abiding source of truth and grace and virtue. In the allotment of provinces for the preaching of Christ's holy gospel to the world, the Scythian regions are said by Eusebius and others to have fallen to this Apostle;

but the scene of his martyrdom appears to have been Achaia, where he is said to have been condemned by the proconsul to a lingering death by crucifixion; having first hailed the cross as an instrument of rest and felicity, from having once borne the sacred body of his Redeemer. There is an epistle of the presbyters of Achaia giving a minute account of his martyrdom; which if genuine, as some¹ of great learning and judgment also have thought it, would be among the most precious monuments of primitive antiquity. It cannot however be dissembled that the preponderance both of reason and authority lie the other way: the document though well composed, and containing no other faith than what was in the Church of Christ from the beginning, expresses several doctrines rather in that highly developed and didactically expressed form in which their expression was cast by the inquiries and the opposing heresies of subsequent times, than as they were usually expressed during the age of the Apostles.

But let us proceed to the universal instruction involved in this history. It might be imagined from the more even temperament that appears to have characterized St Andrew, and the less variety of particulars known with certainty or high probability concerning him than of many other Apostles, that there would be little room for special exhortation from his example. Yet there is one lesson most

¹ *e.g.* Natalis Alexander in *Hist. Ecc. and Gott. Lumper* in *Hist. SS. Patrum.* tom. i. p. 202 seq. But the contrary opinion of Tillemont, Ruinhart, Dupin, Cave, &c. &c. is confirmed by the silence of antiquity on this document, and the marks of later composition in itself.

powerfully suggested by all that we hear in the gospel concerning him, as well by that call from which it is more particularly deduced in the Church's collect for this day: the lesson of faithfully and promptly following up the opportunities which each position in life affords, as the only method of improving that position, and rendering the further advances more sure in the road that leads to life eternal.

By placing himself under the forerunner's tuition, St Andrew was in the right track for that kingdom of heaven which was then close at hand: but that would have availed but little, had he not well weighed and followed out for himself the words of the Baptist precursor, so as even from a passing exclamation of his master to be led to farther enquiries at the fountain head. Thus it was that he found Christ himself, whom truly to know is everlasting life: thus was he prepared, when the call of divine duty came, to obey it at every sacrifice: thus was he led from humble beginnings to the highest and most heroic virtue; to taking pleasure in afflictions for Christ's sake; to devoting himself, in the face of persecution and obloquy and death, to the glory of God and to the good of mankind; hailing even the painful cross as a prelude to a happy immortality. And similar is the instruction to each one of us: for however short of the duty of an Apostle may be the trial imposed on us, it requires the same self-denying spirit if we would attain immortality,—the spirit of faith and patience and unwearied charity. To attain these

graces of the Spirit, let none be seduced, either by indolence or any false teaching, to think lightly of present opportunities, however apparently humble and ordinary. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more: from him that neglects this, even what he hath shall be taken away. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," says the Saviour to the self-complacent Laodicean Church: "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Happy is he who following up his baptismal grace thus habitually overcomes; who hears his Lord knocking at the door in every opportunity of good that lies before him, in order that, like St Andrew, he may meet his Lord, (who now ascended and glorified is nearer to his Church than ever,) and derive from that Divine Source truths, which from the slothful and irreverent are ever concealed. Happy is he whom the consciousness of past neglects, and grievous losses arising thence, have made at length attentive and vigilant: who has learnt from the example of the spouse in the Canticles, who heard the knock, but delayed to open; from whose sight, when she opened, the Beloved was then withdrawn; who sought and found Him not; who called and was not answered; whom the watchmen found, and smote and wounded, ere the treasure of her inmost spirit was found again¹.

¹ Cant. v. 2—7. Rev. iii. 19, 20, 21.

Another lesson is the guilelessness of heart, the heart free from corrupt prejudices, which characterizes St Andrew, and all those described in St John's first chapter, who were led by similar means to find Christ and eternal life. For, though the last exemplification is fixed in Nathanael, the same spirit appears in all: the spirit which, whatever its previous impressions had been,—and those of the Jews were all grievously wrong concerning the Christ,—yet rectified them all by the sight of the Truth presented to them, and realized that beatitude of our Lord, "Blessed is he whoever is not scandalized in me;" who suffers not within himself any evil root which might, at length, fatally conceal Christ's truth from him. And very necessary is it to observe the true marks of this excellent Christian disposition; because, in these times especially, there is a counterfeit which usurps its name, while in fact it has nothing common with it. That which is now most frequently vaunted under the name of liberality, is neither more nor less than a total indifference to all truth; a disposition to count no set of opinions or principles as either better or worse than other: and what is denounced under the name of prejudice requiring renunciation, is that deference to authority which is as reasonable as it is humble; which, to all men whatever, is the first step towards attainment of the truth, and which to the mass of mankind, who are unequal to personal investigation, is the surest and most indispensable safeguard to truth and righteousness. Now, if this so-called liberality be a virtue, most assuredly there is little

trouble in acquiring it : the most indolent or indifferent person would then be the most liberal. But let us not deceive ourselves : this, like all other virtues, needs self-denial for its attainment : nor have we any elements of character for its acquisition, unless we have, like Andrew, an earnest love of truth for its own sake, and consequently, a sense of the unhappiness of them who possess it not, such as will lead us to sympathize with and make allowances for them. To do this sincerely and habitually, without impairing our zeal and love of truth, is indeed a laudable exercise of charity ; but when a man, from ignorance of himself, or of what is required for his virtue and happiness, thinks it exactly the same thing, whether religion be true or false, whether Christ be received or renounced, whether we have amongst us the faith and ordinances He bequeathed to his Church or not,—such a one may indeed flatter himself that he is only liberal and charitable ; but he is as far from the praise of true charity and liberality, as he is from the demeanour and conduct of the holy Apostles of Jesus Christ.

In place of these delusions of a short-sighted, but most conceited age, let us pray God, both in secret and in the assemblies of the faithful, to impart to us the docility, the integrity and faithfulness of these Israelites indeed ; qualities which existed in germ when Andrew was first attracted to the Lamb of God, but which were ripened, by the Spirit of Christ glorified, into the Apostolate and Martyrdom we now celebrate with the Church

of God. And in due memory of them whom Christ has thus honoured, let us, in the language of the Church's ancient liturgies, praise, laud, and magnify the name of God, for the grace he has bestowed on men, no other in nature than ourselves : let us praise Him for all his servants departed this life, who have been well-pleasing to God in their generations,—for the Apostles, Patriarchs, and Prophets—for the Martyrs and Confessors, the virgins, saints and teachers, and every just soul made perfect in his faith and fear,—beseeching Him to give us also grace so to follow their bright examples, that this life ended, we may share with them the glories of his everlasting kingdom.

SERMON XXI.

CHRIST PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE, A SIGN OF CONTRADICTION.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Feast of the Purification of the blessed Virgin Mary, which was also Quinquagesima Sunday, Feb. 2, 1845.)

LUKE II. 34, 35.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

ON the three Sundays specially set apart by the Church to usher in the sacred season of Lent, a change of tone appears from that which predominated in the Epiphany season just preceding. From the great spectacle of divine condescension, God manifest in the flesh, which, from the day of the Nativity downward, her offices and prophetic lessons had brought to most prominent notice, a graver voice has now summoned us to consider the duties which that mercy devolves on ourselves,—the bounden service in God's vineyard, in which each of us, according to his vocation, must labour diligently to the close of life,—the watchful solicitude ever becoming us, lest after all done hitherto we be found reprobate or castaway,—lest the seed once

divinely lodged in our hearts become, through the unkindliness of that soil, unfruitful to holiness and immortality :—most of all (as we are now at Quinquagesima reminded), lest that which is the bond of peace and of all virtues, the highest grace of charity, be absent, and thus render all other religious attainment worse than useless. Thus, while it is only from the objective truth revealed that the faithful soul derives that impress and character which is properly Christian, we are ever concurrently led to the subjective examination of this, as what can alone constitute our personal interest in the revelation. And therefore it is, that as the celebration of Christ's first coming was prepared by the severe thoughts of the Advent to judgment, with which its earlier announcements commonly presented it in conjunction,—so must its commemoration as past be exchanged for the yet more severe thoughts of the approaching season. We need a more express direction of our minds to penitential self-examination and discipline, in order that we may celebrate with fruit the highest mysteries of faith that yet await us,—the Divine Saviour in our flesh victorious over the enemies of our salvation, and having satisfied divine justice for our sins, opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Such is the order ever observed in the Church's annual celebration : but the early occurrence on this year of her greatest Paschal festival, while it has made the transition of which I first spoke more sudden and abrupt than in common years, has thrown also to a very unusual coincidence with this

Sunday before Lent, the last of her Christmas solemnities, that of the Purification. The thoughts however which that fortieth day of our Lord's life suggests, singularly harmonize with the severer topics of the moveable season; connected as they are in the Scripture I have just read with the visitation of God's sanctuary and household, and the fall as well as the rising of many in Israel. This subject therefore I would now proceed to investigate, guided as well by the terms of that last of the Old Testament prophets which the Church has appointed in place of the epistle for this day, as by the memorable remarks on the occasion itself, of its venerable eye-witness in the temple. The sacred significancy which the Church delights to trace in every particular of her Lord's manifestation to mankind, will not assuredly be wanting to this; which the sacred historian has encompassed with a greater variety of circumstance and detail than any other of the recorded events of the Saviour's infancy.

First, therefore, let us consider the event in itself: since it is only from the right apprehension of the fact exterior to ourselves, that we can hope to realize the corresponding internal truth. Two legal purposes were answered by our Lord's appearance this day in the temple; the former respecting Him as any other child of Israel, the other as a male and a first-born. The former is that regulation in the book of Leviticus, which required the legal impurity of every birth to be removed, at the expiration of this period, from the mother, by appropriate lustrations and offerings; the latter,

which is the first named by the Evangelist, is the law contained in the books of Exodus and Numbers, that every male which openeth the womb should be counted holy to the Lord. Each reason requires a separate notice, and offers weighty and admirable particulars to our attention.

And for the former, what more significant proof could be afforded of Christ being made sin for us, as the Apostle speaks, than that which this ritual purification exhibits? As thirty-two days before, at his circumcision, and thirty years after, at his baptism, the sinless Lord underwent ceremonial rites, to which nothing but the defilement of human sin gave being or significancy,—because, as He himself declared, it became Him even thus to fulfil all righteousness, to discharge the debt of our sinful race, and thus commence his exemplar of perfect obedience as man,—so was it also, and in a more remarkable manner, in this instance; though not Himself, but his blessed Mother, was here the declared object of purification. Assuredly that birth which was the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, the eternal purity and love, in whose Unity the Father and the Son are for ever One,—the production as man from the virgin root of the stock of Jesse, of Him who was true God of God, the only-begotten from everlasting from the Father, but who was thus by purely divine operation made one of ourselves,—this all-holy Conception and Nativity could bring no stain on her who by the mere favour of the Almighty was the chosen instrument

of this mystery. Yet were the self-same ordinances observed by her whom all generations do therefore call blessed, which the pollution attendant on all ordinary birth entailed, by divine prescription, on every other mother of Israel: a pollution unremoved from any, even by that holy band of matrimony which exempted the parents from actual sin on that account. By each one who had endured Eve's sorrow no sacred thing could be touched, no hallowed rite approached, until (in the words of Moses) "when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation unto the priest: who shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her." Thus expressive of guilt and its expiation are the terms of the divine law here concerned; and these are followed by a provision of which the humble circumstances of the Virgin-mother and her betrothed husband made them very willing to avail themselves: "If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring *two* turtle-doves or *two* young pigeons; the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin-offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

And this may lead to deeper reflections than those which obviously occur on the humility of the blessed Virgin, and her punctual observance of those ordinances, which, since that one holy child-bearing which removed Eve's stain and sanctified humanity,

have given place in the Church to others of a more eucharistic and less onerous nature. Most signally do these legal ordinances attest the truth of that original or birth-sin which, since the first transgression, stains every child of Adam that is by natural procreation born into the world. Of that transgression—we find that the very first effect, even in Paradise, was to attach shame as well as sorrow to one part of our constitution, which had before been wholly free from both. The ineradicable instincts of humanity on this subject form ever a witness too strong for the Pelagian to overcome, who from the certain original goodness of every part of our nature would falsely infer that no stain is now inherent in this: too strong for the dreams of materialist philosophers of the age just gone by, who, referring such sentiments to arbitrary association or prejudice, have imagined that reason only was required to explode and overpower them: too strong, I will add, for all those, wherever they are found, who, not observing the straight line which Christian truth here holds between Manichæan impieties against the Creator on the one hand, and the Pelagian presumption on the other, fancy they perceive contradictions, where there are none, in the Catholic Christian view of this subject; who cannot reconcile the higher sanctity conferred on marriage by the gospel, even beyond the blessing of its original institution, with the especial praise attached by the same gospel to those virgin souls who for the kingdom of heaven's sake have remained single¹. But

¹ See Note A.

the greater the evil of our nature which these circumstances denote, and which nothing but the birth from a pure Virgin of the Eternal Son could meet or remedy,—the more signal and admirable is that which we now commemorate; the condescension that attached to this one immaculate birth the same ritual circumstances as to a sinful one. And let us not overlook the point just adverted to, that this is the *one* immaculate birth; the only spotless conception and nativity in the world. Let us not listen to those, who, intruding into the things which they have not seen, have dared to extend to the blessed Virgin herself this freedom from original sin: though the paganized tastes of a degenerate Christendom did indeed once succeed in establishing this as the popular, and at length the dominant belief, against the distinct indignant reclamation of the last of the Fathers, and of the best and ablest of the schoolmen also. Far from us, I say, be the disposition to comply with such spurious authority as this, or to embrace, under the truly respectable name of unfolded Christian doctrine, what is too visibly no development of truths before received, but an arbitrary and extraneous addition to them. A dogma which has no argument from the intrinsic reason of the case, but what might equally be extended to prove the same exemption from original sin in both the parents of the Virgin, and so for the ancestors without limit; which has no authority to produce from Scripture except what these forced deductions are invoked to amplify; which is contradicted by the most explicit general

testimonies of holy writ, as interpreted to us by all catholic antiquity ; which even, in times when the paramount disposition was in its favour, no council of the Church universal, which has been received by any portion of it as oecumenical, has ventured to define and ratify ;—this may well be pronounced a corruption and fable. Above all, would we caution against the reception of fancies like these, those young and ardent spirits who, repelled by the jejune vagueness and unreality of what is often taught as spiritual religion, by the miserable contradictions and divisions existing among us, and the unrebuked denial by some of the most sacred and precious catholic truths,—are too easily led to seek refuge in quarters where, with those eternal verities (which are there never denied,) these fables and corruptions are indiscriminately mingled. To such I would say : revere, as you well may, the heaven-bestowed purity of her in whom the incarnate Godhead fixed his abode ; join freely with those in every age the most imbued with divine truth, in esteeming her as the blessed among women, “the ever-Virgin, the Mother of God ;” conceive, as you may legitimately and probably of her, such sanctification from the womb as the Scripture predicates of John the Baptist and other saints of old ; but beware lest, in invading—I do not say the divine, but—the human prerogatives also, of “that holy thing which was born of her,” you impair a truth as sacred as any in religion, the corruption of all that is naturally engendered of sinful Adam. From that original stain none but the Virgin-born was free ; He who, as the Church has told us, was

*

thus made without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin¹.

This is then the lesson derived from the first purpose of the Virgin-mother's visit to the temple, the hereditary defilement of our race, which this one immaculate Nativity could alone expiate. But a further view of the mystery of redemption is obtained from the second and principal object of that visit; one which, as I before remarked, concerned not our Lord, like the former, in common with every child, but specially as a first-born son. Thus was it written in the law of the Lord, as cited here by St Luke, "Every male that openeth the womb," *i.e.* the womb that had been closed before, "shall be counted holy to the Lord." The declaration was made by the mouth of Moses on the day when the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt by their armies; and again we find it repeated in the law, and this reason annexed: "Because all the first-born are mine: for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast; mine shall they be: I am the LORD." In one of these ordinances the tribe of Levi is represented as taken instead of the first-born for the exclusive service of God, and thus obtaining the redemption or exemption of the rest; but still, in acknowledgment of the Divine right, the presentation of each male first-born was required at the divine altars, before they could be redeemed by their parents to ordinary or secular life.

Now this law and its reason, viewed in connexion

¹ See Note B.

with its accomplishment by Him who is the end of the law for righteousness, is pregnant with important considerations to the Church of God. The first promise of redemption to our offending parents announced, as its instrument and pledge, an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: an antagonism of never-dying hostility between the race that bore the apostate lineaments of the tempter, and that better seed to be educated in process of time from the offending mother, and, finally, to issue in the Virgin-born, the head of salvation and victory over Satan to all. In the patriarchal periods, before and after the flood, this enmity had its several distinct developments, till a more definite character of family separation was stamped upon it by the call of Abraham as the father of the promised seed; and the sojourn of Israel in Egypt imparted to it for the first time the marks of national opposition. It was then, when the Church of God, enclosing germinally the Son of Man the Redeemer, was represented by the shepherd sojourners in Goshen, shorn of all political power, but in growing numbers and influence formidable,—and when the apostate world, in all its pride and power and high material civilization, was represented by the Egyptian oppressors,—then, I say, it was that Pharaoh, the mystic Lord of this world, is addressed by Moses in the words which form the basis of the ordinance we are now considering: “Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold,

I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." The accomplishment of this Divine menace procured what nothing less could procure, the rescue of the people of God from the house of bondage: and then it was for the emancipated nation in all after-ages to keep alive the remembrance of this mercy; not only to celebrate, as the queen of festivals, the Passover with its unleavened bread, its spotless lamb, and blood of sprinkling that preserved them from the fate of Egypt's first-born; but, in commemoration of the same great fact, to esteem their own first-born God's especial right and purchase. For thus had He declared Israel his son, even his first-born, to the hardhearted king of the smitten nation: and thus by standing ordinance did he perpetuate the sense of his adoption, and of his covenant with their fathers, with Abraham and his seed for evermore.

Here then the Eternal Son, to whom all these types had reference,—He who was therefore made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem those that were under the law, and that we might receive the adoption of sons,—He now appeared in his own house, as though He were the object, and not the agent, of that redemption. He whom the Paschal deliverance especially denoted,—who was to interpose his precious blood between his people and the avenging sword that smites the impenitent, and to make, through the opening waves of death and the grave, a highway for his redeemed to pass with safety,—He was now presented in simple memorial of the typical deliverance; as it

were in earnest of his future all-perfect self-oblation, and its acceptance on the heavenly altar continually. And well did the earnest here exhibited correspond to the future fulfilment. The lowliness of this presentation was a fit prelude of that mystery which brought power out of weakness, and heavenly glory from the very depths of earthly ignominy: the adoption by the humble offerers of the least costly sacrifice admitted by Moses, well indicated Him who being rich became poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be rich; who came especially to hallow the state of poverty, and to render it, what it never had been before even in Israel, most honourable and blessed in his new institute of religion. And a further significancy to the same purpose is supplied by what we may term the obscurity of the transaction. That offering which, were its object and issue known, might have been expected to command the fullest pontifical service and attendance that the ancient ritual and its ministers could supply, found apparently but two witnesses beside the actual sacrificants. One of these is an aged female, who, after seven years of holy wedlock, had consecrated to God a widowhood of twelve times that duration, and served him in fastings and prayers and vigils in his temple continually: the other a venerable man, whose faith and devotion was here rewarded by the vision, before promised to him by the Spirit, of the Christ of God; who thence, in words ever dear to the Church, thanked his Lord for having given him his peaceful and glad dismissal;—having now attained

his dearest object on earth in the sight of the long-expected salvation,—the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the peculiar glory of Israel.

But yet more signally is this prelude character of our Lord's first oblation manifested by the light of Simeon's faith and piety. Now for the first time in the Saviour's earthly career is a decided glimpse afforded—not only of the salvation He brought to Israel, but of the strange and painful means through which it should be effected. The Son of David, announced ten months before by Gabriel to the Virgin as the destined heir of his ancestor's throne, who should rule over the house of Jacob for ever,—is now prophetically described to the same blessed mother in a new and unheard-of—an apparently opposite—character, as an object of obloquy; a sign that should be spoken against; a mark at which opposing malice should aim the shafts of bitter words and deeds; till their consummation in a scene of extreme suffering, the reflected anguish of which should pierce as a sharp sword the sympathetic heart of her who was to witness it. And all this,—including the predicted scene of Calvary, and the afflicted mother at the foot of the Cross,—all this was to be, “that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed:” thus should the Son of Mary be set up for the restitution of many in Israel, but at the same time for the fall of many. On this last effect of Christ's coming, the language of the inspired Simeon accords with that of the last of the Old Testament prophets, which we read also in this day's service: “The Lord

whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Angel of the covenant whom ye delight in:" this object of your professed hope and delighting anticipation shall indeed come, he assures the people, but how? as an unexpected and unwelcome visitant; as a refiner's fire, a purifier of the sons of Levi, through whom the offerers of acceptable sacrifice should be restored, while the residue should fall to irremediable ruin. "Behold, He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? Or who shall stand when He appeareth?"

Where then, it may be asked, are the marks of judicial separation, or cleansing of the sanctuary, in that lowly presentation which we have been considering? We see them indeed in a measure in his visitation of the temple at the last Passover, when, attended with loud Hosannas as the Son of David, He entered his Father's house as his own, and thrust out the buyers and sellers from its precincts; when, in the face of the hostile chief priests confounded and exasperated at his authoritative proceedings, he denounced their 'hypocrisy, and the fearful doom impending, which only his faithful followers should escape; when Jerusalem should be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, and the vineyard of God committed to other husbandmen, the priests and ministers of his holy Catholic Church. But how are these visitatorial characters accomplished in the presentment of the *infant* Saviour in that place? The sudden coming, the swift witness, the devouring fire,—the trial which few could abide, and none without fear

and trembling,—where see we these in the lowly scene of the purification? Yet taken in the ordination of its circumstances towards the coming catastrophe, and to the separation of good and evil by Christ's appearing, this first visit of the Lord to his temple partakes most certainly of what we have seen to be the character of his last. When we consider that the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David, was a matter to which none of the Hebrew nation was indifferent,—that to the Pharisees and the mass of the people it was an object of cherished religious anticipation,—and by all, even the least pious, desired as the source of that prosperity and independence which was to the Jews a principal symbol of divine favour,—while by Herod alone and his partisans it was dreaded, as endangering the perpetuity of his dynasty,—if we consider this, well may we count that coming a sudden one which lighted in the midst of expectations like these, and by its very unobtrusiveness eluded them. When no solemn service announced the presentation at the Divine altars of Him who was born King of the Jews, and whom the Magi of the distant East had been summoned to approach with homage in his humble lodging at Bethlehem; when the priests and people of Israel were in general profoundly ignorant of that which it apparently so concerned them to know; when two devout worshippers only are recorded as assisting at the solemnity; and only those who were instructed by the prophetess Anna's report are cognizant of the matter subsequently;—well may we say that the King's coming was such as to take the nation by surprise. And can we deem

it less sudden or surprising, when we observe the continued process of things in the same direction? when we see it so arranged by Divine Providence for the trial of God's people, that none but honest and pure and earnest minds were ready to receive or even recognize their Lord: the rest were either listless throughout, or repelled at the outset by appearances so little partaking of the stately grandeur they anticipated; or, if their curiosity were at first excited by the heavenly signs either witnessed or reported to them, their interest subsided by degrees, and eventually vanished, when nothing of national concern or consequence appeared to be evolved from them. Thus, while they who truly looked for redemption in Jerusalem observed these events, and watched for more; while the persons thus minded, whom either the adoring shepherds or the pious widow had instructed, continued in faithful expectancy to look for their coming Sovereign; and "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart;"—those of dissimilar character were either unaffected altogether, or placed by the circumstances of their reception at a greater distance from Christ than they had ever been before. That mysterious virtue of the Divine Presence which made it alternately a centre of attraction and repulsion to opposite descriptions of his people,—which made it a rock of support to one, a stone of stumbling to the other,—that mysterious virtue was now already in operation: it may be said to have received its first marked illustration when, amidst the adoration of Simeon and Anna, and the neg-

lect or contemptuous indifference of others, the great High Priest and Victim for human sin was presented in the temple of Jerusalem. The Light to lighten the Gentiles was yet uncomprehended by the darkness of those to whom He more peculiarly came as his own: the glory of God's people was already in a measure a stone of offence, if not a sign of contradiction, to the many: the thoughts of many hearts were about to be stirred by the news, to be moved more and more to the one class or the other of Israelites, which, when Christ appeared as a teacher, should be distinguished as his followers or his opponents. And the sword which should eventually cut short his earthly life, and pierce through the soul of his blessed mother also, was already unsheathed for sharp foretastes of suffering to both, in the coming slaughter of infants on his account, and the painful exile by which alone He was enabled to escape it.

It would be impossible in our present time to investigate the several possible links between this transaction in the house of God, and what occurred on the same great theatre thirty years after. With one intermediate visit the sacred record of our Evangelist has in this same chapter acquainted us: when, twelve years subsequently to the song of Simeon, the youthful Saviour was again found in the temple of Jerusalem by those who had vainly sought him elsewhere, and declared to the anxious mother, that there in his Father's house it behoved Him peculiarly to be. Nor was his visit there without some stirrings of heart among the doctors of the law

there present, whom his understanding and answers filled with astonishment; and among whom we may well conceive such speculations to arise respecting the Author of the coming dispensation, as eighteen years after distinguished a Nicodemus or a Joseph of Arimathæa from Caiaphas and the majority of their council; and in the end converted them, by God's grace, from timid defenders to firm and zealous disciples. A more practicable as well as useful object is before us, than that of connecting the discernment or neglect of the infant Christ by contemporary Jews, with the more explicit faith or unbelief of the same persons, or their successors, in his subsequent doctrine. That object is to trace the analogies of their case with ours; to accept the prophetic words of Simeon as applicable most strictly and immediately to ourselves.

The presence of the Incarnate Lord is no less real by his Spirit with his mystical body now on earth, than it was of old with Israel in the days of his flesh. But now, as then, it may be a hidden presence: I mean, that as the Divinity was then shrouded by the outward accidents from carnal eyes, and the true character of the celestial Visitant among them was thence unknown,—so it may be now with the assigned vestiges of his spiritual Presence; we may now be repelled or alienated by what should fix our regard and allegiance to Him as our Sovereign. And therefore as the first Advent separated the carnal Jew from the household of faith and the inheritance of Abraham, so may we be found at his last coming separated by unbelief and

disobedience from the kingdom of which we were admitted members. We see partially how it was in this respect with the earlier "children of the kingdom," as Christ himself terms them; who had the true Light displayed to them, but apprehended it not; in whom blindness produced neglect, or (when evasion was impossible) aversion and positive hostility; to whom the very line upon line, and precept upon precept, afforded, became, as Isaiah foretold, snares to entangle and make them fall, through the stubborn resistance of their hearts to a fulfilment so paradoxical and so unwelcome; to whom the sure foundation-stone laid in Sion was thus a stone of stumbling, being disobedient; to whom, in other words, the very coming of the promised Redeemer became the means of alienation from the hope which they had gloried in inheriting, and consigning them to the exterior darkness¹. But in proportion to our perception of this strange fact, should be our concern lest their case may be our own also: lest the Child, who was for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, may have been to us a cause of falling away, rather than of resurrection to righteousness; and that light, which reveals the thoughts of many hearts, should have detected merely, without amending, the errors and obliquities of ours.

Well then may this general surprise and offence of the expectant Jews at their King excite our vigilant concern for ourselves and others. We know who hath said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man

¹ Is. xxxiv. 9—16. 1 Pet. ii. 6—8. Matt. xxi. 42—44; viii. 10, 12, &c.

cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" the faith which realizes things unseen; to which the person of the Saviour, his words and works, are living objective realities; to which while all the past is matter of grateful interest and commemoration, the future is an object of faithful expectancy; the faith of those who watch and wait for their Lord's coming, whether it be in their time or the generations after them, and fix their attention on the footsteps of his presence in the earth, not (as some fondly deem it) in disparagement of Him, but as appointed tokens and mementoes of Him. Vainly do we profess such faith, if our hearts are attached to objects whether of the world or the flesh which He requires us to renounce; or, if influenced by other subtle vices of the spirit, we receive under the name of his truth only what suits our interest or our prejudice. Vainly do we profess faith, if by an error answering to that of the Jews in our Lord's time, but far less excusable in us than them, we see nothing in religion but what is external or national; if the establishment by secular power which the Cross has gained from the world, instead of being in that view a ground of thankfulness and solicitude, become the mainspring and principal object of our regard and interest in the Church; if we invoke religion only in matters where worldly policy fails us; and while we would be thought to lament the sinful deficiencies of the existing church in time past, dread nothing more than her awakened energy, her rising to the full consciousness of her

own position, and vitally exhibiting to the world the sacred truth and the self-denying charity of her Lord.

If then such holy care be at all times becoming, shall it be less so now? At no time indeed has Christ ceased to be a sign of contradiction: for every part of his truth offends against some way of the corrupt world, and calls forth its measure of contending obloquy. But when the strife of tongues, however evoked, is raging vehemently around us,—and in the animosities elicited, neither the order of the Church, nor authority nor piety are respected,—when heady self-will and furious prejudice are invoked as sufficient arbiters on matters on which it is for faithful knowledge only to determine, and apostolic authority to pronounce,—and when what is greater than faith and knowledge, even charity, is mangled and bleeding in the encounter,—the thoughts of many hearts are now indeed stirred, and if not yet revealed, are in the process of fuller development for evil or for good hereafter. God forbid that we should doubt that on sides which our manifold confusions and misapprehensions have separated, Christ has His own notwithstanding; and that while in the sifting of purposes and feelings that is in process, some will fall hopelessly under the adversary, others will fall to rise again; their thoughts corrected and purified by a longer experience and a better sense of things. Meanwhile, let us hold for certain that there is one truth which Christ has bequeathed to the world, and one Church, against which the gates of hell shall

never prevail; that while error is multiform and self-destructive, this truth is essentially one; and that, however modified by other associations, or various human forms of thought, the character moulded by that truth is substantially one also. Be it our care to seek that truth where alone it is to be found; in careful attention, with all saints, to the light already vouchsafed to us, and conscientious obedience to its requisitions. May we be, with Simeon and Anna, in God's house, and in his work; not with the politic scribe, the self-approving Pharisee, the earthly-minded Herodian or Sadducee: for thus shall we meet Christ our Lord, who from the double-minded and wrong-hearted is ever concealed, and in Him what will resuscitate from all evil, and preserve from falling for evermore.

SERMON XXII.

SELF-DISCIPLINE THE SECURITY AGAINST REPROBATION.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the First Sunday of Lent, February 9, 1845.)

1 CORINTHIANS IX. 25, 26, 27.

Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

To minds prepossessed with notions of the gospel now very commonly prevalent, these words must suggest an enquiry of wonder, unknown to all its earlier readers. Whence, it may be said, the necessity to St Paul of a conflict and solicitude like this? He who was in no wise behind the chief of the Apostles, though the last chosen of all,—distinguished by a miraculous call of Christ,—termed a “chosen vessel” even from the first, and bearing throughout the marks of the divine election perceptible to himself as to others,—why should he thus discipline himself by voluntary chastisement, as though the outward tribulation that ever encompassed him were not sufficient? And yet further, when en-

gaged in arduous labours in Christ's cause, by the sole grace of God inspiring and directing him,—why should the object of these labours be described as in the above passage, to be not for advancement, but for security? How could he have cause to dread, lest without such labour and such self-discipline, he should be found, according to the term here employed, adulterate, reprobate, and cast-away?

Such however is, beyond all question, the Apostle's own account of the motive of his proceedings; such is his habitual sense of his own condition. And it surely becomes us to consider it well: for it is too evident to need proof, that what formed an object of anxious attention to St Paul cannot reasonably be a matter of indifference or inferior solicitude to us. The picture of the great Apostle's perpetual self-denial, his purity and long-suffering kindness, amidst the most appalling trials from without and within, has been this day¹ set forth by the Church from the second Epistle to the Corinthians, as the best model of that earnest religious spirit to which in the sacred season now begun she is solemnly inviting us all. Well then may we recur to this parallel testimony from the former epistle²; in which, though with less accumulation of particulars respecting his practice, he more distinctly declares its object, motive, and end; subjoining immediately, in a most remarkable manner, the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, .

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 1—10.

² 1 Cor. ix. 24—x. 12.

as a model to Christians of a common calling and baptism and sacramental privilege, and at the same time of a common peril of falling away. Let us now, therefore, enquire respecting the inspired author himself, first, what could be the grounds of his self-suspicion and solicitude;—secondly, what are the means of security which he was thence led to adopt. And may the same Holy Ghost which both directed his life and indited this description of it, assist and guide our enquiry.

And on the former question, respecting the grounds of this self-suspicion, let me first reply negatively. When expressing a fear that he should be cast away at last as base and worthless metal¹,—it could not be that he doubted the genuineness of his apostolical commission, or that wonderful call from heaven which first conveyed it, when he was arrested on his journey to Damascus by a supernatural light, and by the expostulation of that Jesus whom he persecuted, converted from the zealous persecutor, to the champion and Apostle of Christ. It could not be, I say, that he doubted even for a moment, of the reality of that vision and heavenly voice. He who on two different occasions recorded in the Acts, (after the first relation of the event by St Luke,) tells the story of it himself at length, once to the assembled Jews from the castle at Jerusalem, and again before the tribunal of Festus and Agrippa,—on both occasions with every particularity of circumstance that

¹ Jer. vi. 30. Isai. l. 22.

could make the fact indubitable both to himself and others,—he who, beside these express narrations, so often in the course of his writings alludes and appeals to this event, as the great and wonderful manifestation of divine grace to him, (as one born out of due time,) also as the mark and seal of that apostleship which he declares he holds not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ,—he cannot, I say, be suspected of hesitating respecting a fact that thus turned and influenced his whole course of life and action. As easy were it for him to forget that glory which struck him trembling and astonished to the earth, and made him ask of Him whom before he knew not, but despised or hated as a deceiver, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”—as easy to forget the blindness that ensued, and the entire change of purpose that introduced him soon after as a meek brother among those whom he had just before been haling to imprisonment and death,—as it were for him to doubt for an instant that all this was the work of God. No: as the supposition is in the first sight improbable or impossible, so in fact we find it most untrue: the faith of the blessed Apostle never wavered from that moment: never was he induced to forget,—never tempted to doubt—that he was indeed *σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς*, a vessel of Christ’s own election, to be a minister and witness of those things which he had seen and heard; sent miraculously for this purpose, as to the Jews his countrymen, so principally to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan

unto God. This then could be no part of the hesitation he here expresses concerning his own final character: he could not fear that he should be detected to be *ἀδόκιμος*, refuse or spurious, on *this* ground.

As therefore it could not be that he suspected the truth of his conversion and divine commission long since, neither could it be, secondly, that he doubted as to the course in which he was *now* engaged, and which, at the moment of his writing, he was zealously pursuing as the path of true glory and immortality. For he who in this self-same place tells us, "he runs, not *as uncertainly*," could not possibly be a subject of such dismal hesitation as this respecting his whole course in life, and the issue to which it tended. Neither does this history justify the supposition that such was ever the case of St Paul: for constant and unwavering as we have seen his faith to have been respecting the divine character of his Saviour, and his own commission received from Him—so constant and so unvarying do we find his obedience. He could say with truth, when the necessity of self-vindication compelled him to what he terms the folly of glorying, that he laboured more abundantly than they all, *i. e.* all the Apostles and chief ministers of Christ: and while his constant language is, "not I, but the grace of God that is with me," yet could he confidently appeal to the witness of others for the truth of his protestation to both Jewish and Roman judges, "herein I exercise myself to have a conscience void of of-

fence towards God, and towards men¹." And he says also to these same Corinthians, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that with simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in this world." And in the passage of this day's Epistle he represents himself to the same correspondents as "giving no offence in anything; that the ministry be not blamed, but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Such is St Paul's conviction of the grace and blessedness attendant on the whole course of his strife and warfare, as sufficient to neutralize its sharpest earthly trouble by the richness of heavenly benefit both in possession and in prospect. Agreeably to this he says to the Romans like minded with himself, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear"—like the people of old, who had indeed

¹ Acts xxiii. 1; xxiv. 16. 1 Cor. xv. 10. 2 Cor. xi. 18—30; i. 12, &c.

a course of obedience assigned them, but no such abundant grace and blessedness to encompass and secure it: "ye," he continues, "have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." And surely one, in whom this last condition was so manifestly verified as it was in St Paul,—who could truly say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"—he, I say, was obviously and confessedly under the persuasion that he was a child of God, sharing the privileges of that character, observing its duties, and expecting its celestial inheritance¹.

As therefore the apprehension here expressed could not consist in any doubt of the Apostle as to his past call or his present course of life,—as we have shewn, on the contrary, that the Apostle's mind was the seat of calm, well-grounded assurance on both these momentous points,—we have only left to conclude that the apprehension he here expresses mainly respected the future. But even here I have to add, thirdly, that it could not be that the Apostle suspected that his Lord would at some time desert him, or that the grace of Christ was not all-sufficient to support him in that path of faith

¹ Rom. viii. 15—17. Gal. ii. 20.

and obedience on which he was so happily entered, and in which he continued to that day. For were his mind the seat of any such tormenting suspicion as this, how could he have adopted that confident language, when, anticipating the close of life, he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day"? Not, however, to dwell upon this declaration, which the holy Apostle makes to Timothy, evidently in the very near prospect of his approaching martyrdom, "when he is now ready to be offered, and the time of his departure is at hand,"—let us descend to other places, where he speaks, not as on the confines of the future world, but more with the community of Christ's faithful servants, in this. How could he, if suspicious that God's gracious favour might be hereafter withdrawn, and he might fall in consequence, speak in the strain which his writings breathe respecting the future hopes of the true believer? How could he say to others that he was "confident of this very thing, that He which had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"—unless he had a very good hope for himself that the God who had called and supported him hitherto, would not abandon the soul that adhered to Him¹? Again, he says; "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. Philip. i. 6. Rom. viii. 34 seq.

hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us." "Who," he then adds, "shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Such is our Apostle's strain of certain confidence, while reposing in devout adherence on the grace which supports and sanctifies him for immortality. How then are we to reconcile this with the possibility of another event, which he expresses in the passage before us in a manner too clear to be mistaken, too strong to be explained away?

The Apostle's apprehension arose from himself: not from failure on God's part, but from the sin that was in himself. Sin unrepressed within might have ruined that testimony of conscience on which his present assurance was shown to depend,—and, unless there were the like expectation of its continued repression, would now equally ruin all hopeful assurance for the future. Accordingly, sin is not found included in that list of enemies which he says, in that triumphant passage just quoted, had no power to separate us from the love of God in Christ. For sin can do what tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or sword, cannot do; it

can, when admitted and unrepented, separate the soul from God, and make void that blood of Christ which was shed for the removal of sin. And though it is indeed a blessed truth that the grace of Christ can secure us from this most deadly of enemies, and can procure us penitence and remission for the sin committed,—yet is there good reason, doubtless, why St Paul did not include sin in his enumeration, as some very different spirits, who would be imitators, have ventured to do since: nor is that reason imperceptible from the analogy of faith. It is because sin is not like the other enemies, one whose successful assaults can be anticipated with defiance by any genuine Christian: because our security against other foes is in proportion to our absolute dread of this; our contempt of the utmost they can do, in exact proportion to the awful apprehension we entertain of this: because, finally, herein consists the perseverance to which the true believer looks with humble hope, in the continual struggle against, and mortification of, sin. And this condition, strictly implied even when it is not expressed,—when the sacred writers speak the language of hope, and encouragement to duty,—is ever stated in terms, when they express the same points in a didactic or doctrinal form: thus effectually condemning that systematic theology of later years, which, by suppressing this ever-understood condition, turn what is æsthetically most true and consolatory to the faithful, into what is dogmatically false and perilous. For the same chapter that contains the above-cited expressions of exulting confidence,

tells us also, that if we live after the flesh we shall die; but, "if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body," thus, and thus only, "we shall live."

It is our concern at present to survey this truth as expressed by St Paul respecting himself in the words of the text: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Words deeply deserving our consideration; for herein we see what was the ground of that holy confidence which the same Apostle expresses elsewhere in the love of Christ: this shows by what means, and in what path he had it; and how, consequently, alone we are entitled to claim it. Unhappy indeed are the persons whom either blind carelessness to religion on the one hand, or a deluded fanaticism on the other, have made more certain of themselves on this subject than this most eminent apostle and Christian! And unhappy those who do not seek for assurance in God's favour by the same path that he sought for it,—with however distant and most unequal steps, yet still following him, as he followed Christ! With these considerations ever present to our minds, let us now consider more minutely these words of our inspired teacher.

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." It is not, he says, as though I knew not what course I was pursuing,

or were contending against I knew not what. This shows us that the Christian life is a plain and well-defined thing, to which it is the duty of every one to adjust and conform his own proceedings,—and the privilege of a confirmed Christian to be assured of that life being realized in himself. The greater number of mankind, it is to be feared, live either in a groundless assurance, or, what is scarcely less dangerous, a contented indifference and uncertainty upon this point; caring not how they walk, having no rule by which they regulate their actions, yet indistinctly hoping that it will be equally well with them at last. It is this torpid slumber which St Paul warns his Corinthian correspondents not to indulge, when he tells them that it is a serious race in which they were engaged, and the prize not to be won by one who runs uncertainly, without attending to his steps, or his progress to the mark: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” To do this it is necessary that you observe a certain course,—that you be first well persuaded of your entrance upon it, and then be careful that you adhere to it.

The preliminary to all such care must be a conviction that the right path has been once entered upon; and this, in a dispensation of grace, involves, in the first instance, our admission by God to this course and arena of duty, and next, our conscious acceptance of its terms. Now, on the former point, which necessarily precedes all, the solicitude of the child of God is met by the holy Scripture and the

Church with the comforting assurance of his regeneration in baptism ; wherein he was made a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. This maxim, on which the whole catechetical instruction of the Church catholic rests, on which alone Christian education in the true sense can proceed, without which there is neither a defined basis of Christian perseverance to the faithful, nor any material of properly Christian repentance to the lapsed or fallen, is denied, as a matter of course, by all those who would extenuate or explain away St Paul's assertion in my text. By those who have brought themselves to believe that none who are born again of the Spirit and justified can ever fall into the state of ungodliness, it is matter of necessity to maintain the correlative proposition, that ungodly persons cannot have been at any time born of the Spirit nor justified. But to this proposition, however confidently repeated to us as if it were an axiom in religion, we oppose the ever-reiterated declarations of holy Scripture to the contrary, and the method of the holy apostles in particular ; who, when warning their baptized disciples, as they continually do, against the danger of being found reprobate or counterfeit at last, never do so according to this recent method, by extenuating the grace that had been afforded them, but by magnifying it ; never treat their baptism as a mere rite, but, on the contrary, enlarge on its spirituality. So deals St Paul with the Roman and the Galatian Christians : and thus also in the present epistle, when in warning against apostasy, and including himself

also in the caution, he introduces immediately after my text the analogy of the fathers of Israel; all partakers of Christ as far as the Mosaic dispensation exhibited Him, all baptized equally with Caleb and Joshua in the cloud and in the sea; yet whom their own lusts overthrew in the wilderness: these he presents as ensamples to baptized Christians, not certainly to deter them from over-rating their present grace, but, on the contrary, from lightly esteeming and thus losing it. Shall any then presume to tell us that a course taken by the apostles, as truly as by the whole Church after them, is unsafe for us? Shall it be said that considerations which might be addressed without scruple to the halting and semi-apostate Christians of Galatia, or to Christians entangled, like those of Corinth, in most serious scandals and sins, require now to be suppressed through care for the spirituality of religion? Far from us be such presumptuous departure from the apostles and all that have followed them; the setting up in our instance of a tradition three centuries old against the testimony of the Church universal and our own.

For on this, as on other points, the old Church doctrine will be found far more holy and spiritual than that which a delusive and unbelieving spirituality would substitute for it. Small as may be the number of those who have never soiled the purity of their baptismal robes, nor forfeited the state of habitual grace from infancy,—their number, even now greater than unbelief would be apt to suggest, might be expected to be vastly increased,

were our faith greater in Christ's ordinance, and if this maxim of apostolic Christianity resumed its proper force among us. But small as is the number of such compared with those who have wandered from the fold, and need conversion and restitution to their lost privilege, before they can be exhorted to persevere,—the reality of that privilege is no more impeached by that consideration, than was the truth of the common blessing to all Israel, by the overpowering majority of those that perished. If their unbelief and apostasy did not impeach the truth of God in their calling and privilege, then neither do the carnal and inconsistent lives of the baptized evacuate the grace which once washed away the guilt of their original and precedent sin, and declared them new born into God's household. If there be perpetuity in Christ's religion, then must it be as true now as in the days of his chief apostle—that baptism has once saved those also through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that their distinction from the true Christians (St Peter himself assuring us) is not that they were never purged from their old sins, but, on the contrary, that they forgot they had been purged from them¹. No otherwise do we truly represent their condition: their distinctive guilt, their danger, and need of penitence.

To return, therefore, to the all-important enquiry, whether, by the answer of a good conscience towards God, we are in this state of baptismal grace or not. This state is then only realized, then only is it made good, either as retained or recovered,

¹ 2 Pet. i. 9, also ii. 20, 21 22, &c. &c.

when all sin is renounced. Not that the just man, or child of God, commits no sin : the best men sin much and oft,—though he is the best who sins the least : but the child of God differs from the worldling and the impenitent in this, that he renounces all sin as far as known to him ; he allows himself in no sin, great or small. The worldling may renounce many sins, either those to which he has no natural inclination, or such as he has a strong motive of worldly interest to avoid ; but he does not renounce *all* sin ; he rather balances one sin by another, when he sets his pride to counteract his ill temper or his avarice—his avarice or ambition to restrain his prodigality and love of sensual pleasure. In all this there is no forsaking of sin as sin, or because it is opposed to the law and authority of God : much less is there a renunciation of every sin. This is only the case with him who has set God always before him, God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, yet placable and reconciled to sinners by Jesus Christ ; who therefore submits to Jesus Christ, and takes his law and yoke upon him, as he was enabled to do in the covenant of baptism ; who therefore does not control the flesh by the love of the world, nor let loose against either the spirit of pride, and any other work of the devil, but who, in the fear of God, equally renounces all.

Now, this is no trifling engagement to any ; and to expect that it can be accomplished without opposition, were a vain expectation. For the principles of evil in a fallen world are very strong without and within : and though by persons who comply

freely with these tendencies, or who balance them one against the other, their real force is but little perceived or understood,—it is far otherwise with those who are seriously engaged against corruption, by the vows pledged at the holy laver of regeneration. The strength of a stream is not perceived by him who glides down with it, or sails along it; it is felt by him only who is struggling the contrary way. Hence it is that the deepest consciousness of demerit, the most piercing sense and complaint of sin and error, is found in those who are the most holy and the most virtuous among mankind: it is because he only can sensibly perceive and acknowledge these evils, whose principles and life stand opposed to them. Such a man will see that the expressions made use of in the psalms, and other devotional writings and offices, are no more than the truth, and speak the results of his own experience. Such a man will see the necessity of walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise; of carefully using all the means of grace for opposing sin; of maintaining this opposition perpetually by faith, prayer, and by meditation—lest by giving way, and complying by little and little, by thus losing the sensibility to what is evil, and the strength to move against it, he become at length like them that go down into the pit, in the broad road to destruction. Such an one will, in a word, see the necessity of not running uncertainly, or making a mere show of opposition to what is evil—since the path assigned him, however clear, is a strait and narrow way, and there are many agents,

evil and formidable, who would obstruct his progress in it.

This, then, is the general direction given to the Corinthians, of which St Paul proposes himself to them as an example. The second and last thing to be considered in his words, is the *means* by which he represents himself as accomplishing this—and which he accordingly recommends to them. “Every man that striveth for the mastery,” he says, *i.e.* either in running or wrestling, “is temperate in all things.” The Apostle is here speaking to persons in the immediate neighbourhood of whose celebrated and dissolute city the Isthmian games were celebrated; and he reminds them, by a circumstance with which every man of Corinth was most familiar,—the care taken in training a champion for these games, the spare and temperate diet by which they secured his agility and vigour for a race or fight,—that their own care should not be less to train themselves for a combat, and a race infinitely more interesting and momentous. “They do it,” he says, “to obtain a corruptible crown,” the crown of fading laurel awarded to the victors at those exercises; “but we an incorruptible:” we contend for the prize of everlasting life, which our patient self-denial may secure to us. In vain do we expect that prize, if we are enslaved to the sensual appetites, carried away without opposition whithersoever the sensual will would hurry us: therefore let us learn to oppose and cross that inclination betimes, that it may not have this power over us. For this, the Apostle says, is what I practise

myself: "I fight, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection;" I keep it under, literally, as a vanquished wrestler, and lead it off captive, making it entirely obedient to me: and this I do, lest having preached to others,—or rather lest having acted the part of a herald at the games to mark out the course, to arrange the contest, and award the prize to others,—I myself should prove an unworthy and a rejected champion.

Such is the Apostle's particular direction here. The full import of it is what becomes us now to consider.

To enlarge on the necessity of habitual and constant temperance towards the maintenance of that frame of mind and disposition which religion requires, might seem indeed superfluous. It is obvious to the most unreflecting mind, as it was to heathen moralists, that this branch of duty, though far from being the whole, is the necessary fence and guard to all the rest: he who lives not *soberly* cannot live *righteously*, much less *godly*, in this present evil world: all sense of what is pure and holy must be obscured and lost by such base and brutish gratification of sense; and the pretence of regarding heavenly objects would, under such inconsistency, be invariably deemed hypocrisy. But the allusion to training in the Apostle's discourse, and the account of his practice in consequence, implies something further; viz. that to maintain that resolute, firm habit of soul, which Christ's champion requires, and to arrive at that self-denial

without which no considerable duty towards God and man can be performed or persisted in,—abstinences not only from what is forbidden, but occasionally also from what is in itself innocent and allowable, are useful, nay, necessary branches of self-discipline. If the spirit is to assert absolute power over the inclinations that would hurry us beyond the bound of strict lawfulness, they should not be allowed on every occasion to proceed to the very verge of that boundary, but must be checked and coerced within its limits: no otherwise are we armed as we ought to be for all emergencies, or secure from sinking under unusual pressure and temptation. Such was the dictate of right reason and religion, even under the imperfect dispensation which made less account of this exercise. But far more interest does it derive to Christians from the precept and the example of their Lord,—far more blessed to them is this means for reaching the purer and more refined graces of his calling. For though, when less used to his discipline, and yet unweaned from the ordinary ways of Jewish life, it was not expedient for his disciples to fast while he was with them in the flesh; yet the time for their fasting should come, and should continue, when the bridegroom was withdrawn from their wonted sight, and his invisible supports were needed to feed their faith and their charity. Then was it for them to remark these his directing words, and perform before the all-seeing God, without self-complacency or ostentation, the exercise without which some kind of evil possessions could not be

ejected: then also was it for his Church to supply to the multitudes that needed this exercise of piety, that requisite prescription of stated times for what, without such call on the attention, might be in danger of being omitted altogether. And as the season of our Lord's Passion was thus observed from the first, so was the observance soon extended to these forty days preceding, excluding only the Lord's day festival from the number: when the retirement of Jesus our Lord is brought to view, and the sufferings by which He purchased our salvation.

Will it then be said that a means of piety, which in the days of tribulation and persecution was observed with such voluntary strictness by Christ's best servants and champions, is less needed in an age of quiet and of luxury? Shall we listen, in opposition to the Apostle of the Gentiles, to a new gospel that would make security of salvation the one great duty of a Christian believer, and treat this prescript of saints and martyrs and of the Lord himself, as if it were will-worship or superstition? or shall we heed the more directly carnal or slothful objections, which, with singular inconsistency, alternately urge its difficulty and its insignificance or easiness, as arguments against the possibility of its being acceptable to God? Both these notions would vanish before the conscientious and humble obedience to the church's precept; both the sense of extreme difficulty, and that of nullity or fruitlessness, in the performance: both, I say, would vanish, if the trials from human infirmity being meekly

endured, the beneficial tendencies of the exercise were left to unfold themselves to faithful experience. If fulness of bread, or, in other words, if a never-failing exuberance in the supply of animal wants, is justly enumerated in Scripture among the causes which lead the rich and prosperous especially to a fatal forgetfulness of God, and deadness of spiritual sensation,—then that fast cannot but be eminently useful in the contrary direction, which forces us to think of our condition; and while reminding us of our more destitute brethren, who need our alms and our charity for Christ's sake, instruct us also sensibly of our dependence on God for everything, and thus dispose us to cast ourselves in penitence and self-renunciation on Him who alone sustains our souls in life, and can alone satisfy the highest wants—far transcending mere sensual appetites—of a spiritual and immortal creature. And not only as an exercise of self-denial, or as a natural and proper expression of penitence for those exorbitances of earthly humour which involve us in sin, and thus intercept the light of God's countenance from us,—is this exercise commended by the examples and counsels of Holy Scripture; but as a means of quickening prayer and devotion, of adding wings to the aspirations of the spirit after purer and better joys than this earth can afford. And to this end, it needs to be accompanied with retirement and meditation; with careful abstinence from all self-complacency in the act, as if it were the end and not the means of piety, or any contempt of others whom we either know, or merely

suspect, to live in neglect of it. Among these there may be some whose example in higher and more substantial points of piety may be such as to shame our own: and while this contradiction, like other strange confusions of the day, is by no means sufficient to warrant neglect of Christ's precept, by whomsoever despised in times so singularly ignorant yet self-complacent as these, yet is the consideration one that should animate and humble us. It may well serve as an additional motive to that spirit of quiet obedience, that absence of all personal judgment of others, that union of severity to ourselves with cheerfulness and mildness to all, which is the genuine character of Christ's religion, and so constantly distinguishes its catholic from its sectarian exhibition.

True it is at all times, as the Apostle elsewhere assures us, that bodily exercise of itself profiteth little, but godliness is profitable to all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. To exercise ourselves in this according to the Apostolical precept, by the assiduous practice of all the duties that belong to it, and with a careful use of all the means of grace that bear upon it, is the great lesson which our present text inculcates on us. It is the only means of securing us in the possession of the grace wherein we stand, and securing us from the fearful peril of falling away.

The spiritual world presents no case so awful as his who, having preached to others, hath himself become a cast-away; who has suffered his evil in-

clinations unmortified to deprive him eternally of those rewards which he had himself held out to others as motives to duty, and to doom him to the terrible unseen pains which he had himself denounced as the sure fruit of sin. Yet though the case of the apostate or inconsistent preacher be the worst of all, (and God forbid that the awfulness of the example should ever be absent from our minds whose office it is to dispense the word to others!) still be it remembered that some portion of its most bitter shame and remorse attends all whom the neglect of a salutary self-discipline here excludes from a blissful immortality. To avoid this result, no labour would be too great, no sacrifice too painful: but how willingly should any labour it requires be undertaken, when we reflect on the prize set before us by Christ our Lord, and the bitter pains whereby its right was purchased for us by Him the Captain of our salvation. Viewing in his suffering the demerit of our sins, in his sacrifice and intercession the all-sufficient support of our endeavours, we may find his yoke easy and his burden light; and through the heavenly aid which his household supplies, may so run as to obtain the crown of life—the crown conferred by Him on all that are faithful unto death.

SERMON XXIII.

THE REJECTION OF ESAU.

(Preached at St Mary's, on the Second Sunday in Lent, Feb. 16, 1845.¹)

HEB. XII. 15, 16, 17.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled ; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected : for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

THE first elements of Christian doctrine are stated in this Epistle to be *repentance from dead works*, and *faith towards God* ; to which is immediately subjoined the administration of *baptism*, ever admitting new children to the household of faith, their confirmation by the *imposition of Apostolic hands*, with the doctrine of the *resurrection of the dead*, and of *eternal judgment*. And these principles of the doctrine of Christ, as the inspired Author proceeds to state, are not capable of iteration : the foundation, as such, cannot be laid over again : on it we may—we must—rear the superstructure of Christian obedience, and “go on unto perfection” :

¹ And at Lambeth, March 9, 1845, Fifth Sunday in Lent.

but if otherwise—if what was placed as a basis, instead of being made such, lie exposed to the elements and neglected,—if, once enlightened by baptismal grace, and made partakers of the Holy Ghost, we have so disregarded the heavenly gift, as to provoke its withdrawal,—if the word of God, once tasted, has become thoroughly insipid to us,—and the powers of the world to come, once felt, have lost all influence over our thoughts and actions,—then there is no second renewal in store where the former sufficient one has proved thus ineffectual; when the Son of God has been in us crucified afresh, and put to an open shame¹.

One leading object of this apostolic writing is to warn the Hebrew Christians against this most dismal result,—against an apostasy too possible even after the highest grace received; for such he describes, in the strongest possible terms, in that passage of the Epistle, whereas recovery from a fall such as is there indicated is in his language impossible. Throughout he admonishes his correspondents solemnly, yet affectionately and hopefully, against this; he charges them to remember their first faith and love, and give all diligence to continue it to the end; since we are thus only partakers of Christ to our everlasting felicity as his elect, if we thus hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the last². Thus then while repentance and faith, are as he states, not capable of being reiterated as foundations, they must both be perpetuated in the superstructure. Though we

¹ Heb. vi. 1—6.

² iii. 7—19; x. 19—39, &c.

cannot repeat our solemn renunciation of dead works at baptism, nor accept by a new initial faith the One God in three Persons, to whom in his covenant of grace we were there consigned, yet the principles then vowed once for all must abide, nay, grow within us continually. So long as there is sin, even in memory, there must be repentance: so long as we are absent in the body, there must be faith: only we must remember that these are not maintained and kept alive by themselves, but solely through that obedience which is to be reared upon them. In proportion as sin is subdued, the repentance for what remains, as well as for what is remembered as past, will be ever more vivid and pungent; and so also will be ever proportionally our faith in the one only Saviour. The two principles, separate as they are in conception, and distinguishable in the acts severally flowing from each, are ever, according to the Christian idea of them, united in fact. Repentance without faith—however real as regret for the past,—would become mere remorse, the sorrow that worketh death; and faith, however complete as faith, would become the faith of demons, and void of all justifying power, if in a conscious sinner it were without repentance. It is love which, according to the Scripture, gives to each of the two its Christian form and essence; the love which finds its material in the facts realized by faith; and whose first effect is to awaken repentance towards God, and hearty grief for all that alienates from Him.

The topic now proposed to our meditation is that of an ineffectual repentance: in other words, a sorrow for the past, which, wanting that one Christian characteristic, the abhorrence of sin as sin, and living faith in the Divine Saviour from sin, is therefore inefficacious for its removal, and equally so for averting that which alone causes its own sadness and trouble, the bitter fruit and penalty of sin. Such repentance as this is the natural result of wilfully sinning after grace given; and this it is of which the inspired Apostle in the passage I have read presents Esau as the warning example. The history there vividly referred to has been set before us by our Church in the morning service of this second Sunday in Lent: and if, on hearing its affecting particulars, our human sympathies have been called forth in any measure for the fruitless penitent, the more needful is our correct appreciation of his case. Let us then endeavour, from the facts which the book of Genesis presents, to ascertain this leading point of sacred story, the rejection of Isaac's firstborn: and thus also endeavour, the Divine Spirit being our helper, to trace its true moral in our Christian text.

Of the three great patriarchs constantly mentioned together as the ancestors of God's chosen people, Abraham appears as the brightest example of the faith which was to distinguish his spiritual progeny; while Isaac and Jacob, under varied inferior modifications of the same character, appear chiefly as illustrating the divine election, in the transmission of his sacred privilege. In the ever-concurrent

mention of the three ancestors, we read at once this truth : that whereas from the last of them, Jacob or Israel, *all* his sons, with the whole of their posterity, inherited a share in the divine promise and covenant, he alone received it from his father Isaac; as did Isaac alone from Abraham, to the exclusion of all other children. Isaac had, beside Jacob, one son who forfeited the promise: and Abraham had, beside Isaac, one, and afterwards more, who never possessed it. Abraham's firstborn, Ishmael, was the son of the bondwoman, and as such was alien altogether from the hope of the heir, the freeborn son of Sarah: but it was otherwise with Isaac's firstborn Esau, who was equally with Jacob the child of Rebecca, and apparently entitled, rather than his brother, to the succession of the promise from the father of the faithful, through him in whom his seed should be called. This difference in the historical description of the two cases is seen also in their typical bearing. In the Epistle to the Galatians the son of Hagar is introduced as allegorically representing the carnal Israelite, whose inheritance was of the flesh only, not of promise; who faithlessly rejected Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, at his manifestation, and was therefore expelled from God's house to the spiritual wilderness: whereas, in our present Epistle, we find the elder son of Isaac representing those who had indeed received the promise by faith and shared its gracious privilege, but afterwards profanely lost it. Ishmael is, therefore, in St Paul's discourse, the type of the faithless Jew; Esau, of the apostate Christian.

What, then, is the representation in the patriarchal history to which this type is attached? "Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents." Whatsoever might be their respective modes of life, it should appear equally competent to both the sons of Isaac to mark the extraordinary course of Divine Providence in their behalf, and that call of Abraham their grandfather, by virtue of which they were dwelling in Canaan as strangers. Their advantages for this contemplation were indeed considerable. The wars and other troubles that attended Abraham's first sojourn in that land, and induced his frequent migration with his tents and retinue, had now passed away: a more tranquil, and an equally prosperous life was the lot of the peaceful Isaac: his flocks, herds, and servants, with all moveable possessions, were multiplied and increased abundantly to him in a land, where he had not a foot of fixed inheritance, and not a spot, except the purchased burial-place of his family, that he could call his own. Meanwhile, the records of Abraham and of Lot their kinsman were fixed in the memories of the chosen family: the fate of the cities of the plain was an image to them of some like judgment impending on the towns and villages in the midst of which they sojourned, where sins detestable as those of Sodom were crying aloud for divine vengeance continually: all contributed to instruct them in that which was the great exercise of faith in their economy, as our inspired author describes it in the chapter

preceding this: viz. that they should confess themselves strangers and pilgrims in the land; that without thinking of returning to their kindred beyond the flood, they should look for their citizenship and abiding country from God, who had called them hither; that they should wait in his good time the accomplishment of his promise, to give them and their posterity the very land where they now sojourned; to bless them, and the world through them. All this the "plain man dwelling in tents" did carefully observe: his mode of life was evidently conformed to it, avoiding what would bring him into closer converse than was absolutely necessary with the nations of Canaan, and restricting his familiarity to those who like himself were sojourning in tents as strangers. But how was it in this respect with the huntsman brother? We should err, doubtless, in assuming that the temptations of companionship to which his mode of life exposed him were insuperable; and that the same spirit of faith might not have been exercised even in the field, by him also. We know only that it was not so with him in fact. We find him plunging into those Canaanitic alliances from which, above all things, it was the object of faithful Abraham to secure the heirs of promise; to preclude which he exacted an oath of his Syrian steward, that he would seek Isaac a wife from his old Mesopotamian kindred, the house of Nahor his grandfather. Instead of this pious care, as nearly concerning himself as his father in his earlier years, Esau takes two wives of the children of Heth,

among whom his parents sojourned; whose uncongenial tempers, their alien and doubtless idolatrous habits, were a perpetual grief of heart, as we are told, to Isaac and Rebecca. Afterward, when he has discovered how repugnant to his father and mother are the manners of the Hittite daughters-in-law, he seeks to mitigate this annoyance, not by reforming his existing household, but by taking, over and above these, a new wife, more nearly related to his family; yet for this he goes not, as his brother was directed by Isaac, to the kindred of Rebecca beyond the Euphrates, but to a family more easily accessible, that of his uncle Ishmael, the child of the bondwoman. These repeated acts are not to be mistaken: they indicate a reckless, self-willed man, to whom the hope of his fathers was of no account, when set in the scale against his individual fancy or pleasure. Such a one must have despised his birthright long before the specially profane act by which he threw it away. Having so little habitual sense of the dignity and blessedness of Abraham's inheritance, a slight temptation only was required to make him renounce it formally, and, in language as well as act, to evince his utter contempt for it.

Such is the temptation to which our text first calls our attention: it preceded in time some of the acts which I have alleged as illustrating Esau's character; nor are we sure that it may not have preceded all of these, and that the recklessness of the Canaanitish alliances may not have been mixed at first with a degree of desperate contempt for

the domestic privilege he had forfeited, but which he afterwards presumptuously sought to resume. But however this may have been, we see in him one to whom a paltry sensual inducement was of more weight than the prize for which his near progenitor renounced kindred and friends and home. An hour of faintness after a long chase, the sight of a pleasant repast in his brother's tent, with the offer from him (as if scarcely meant to be seriously answered) that the repast must be purchased by the transfer of his birthright—this is enough to draw from the weary hunter the exclamation, “Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?” We may imagine more easily than we can express the spirit with which this was uttered: the conscious exaggeration, half querulous, half jocose, with which his hungry faintness is termed a state of approaching death; the air of easy good humour and generosity, but in reality of most profane sensuality, with which the birthright, so useless, in his view, to a dying man, is counted as nothing worth beside the good fare that now solicits his eager appetite, and makes him content to give up all, with an oath, to the wary brother that entertains him. “Thus Esau despised his birthright;” says the sacred writer, emphatically, at the close of the chapter: nor is there need now to dwell on the case of the younger brother, obtaining at so easy a cost what he himself prized so highly, and the other counted so cheap.

But the deportment of Esau in the period that followed this profane barter is what we have next

to consider: it is of the greatest moment to the view of what follows, and too much lost sight of in the ordinary view of this transaction. When after his short-lived gratification he had time to reflect on his precipitate and foolish exchange, we might conceive two respectable courses of conduct still open to him. We might imagine him, on the one hand, heartily repenting his folly, and anxious practically to repair it, as far as it was possible; seeking, through the intervention of parents, or friends, or any other legitimate method, either the dissolution of the compact by mutual consent, or such a compromise with his brother as might allow them to share the sacred privilege equally. Or we might imagine him, on the other hand, possessed with the idea that this was hopeless; and while truly penitent for the profaneness he had committed, acquiescing meekly in its consequences; taking up the position of a devout Gentile, instead of a child of the special promise; retreating contentedly from Palestine before the face of his successful brother, and fixing his lot, as he did subsequently from necessity, on the borders of the Arabian wilderness and Mount Seir. But neither of these was the course adopted by the father of Edom. Not the former; for no symptom of a penitent desire to approve himself a stranger and sojourner, like his fathers, can have manifested themselves during this interval in him whose household during the same interval, while unequally yoked with unbelievers, as St Paul speaks, made his mother weary of her life. Neither was the latter course

pursued by him : far from abandoning to Jacob the full rights of the firstborn, with all the various advantages it involved, he never relinquishes the hope that he will yet procure the superior blessing from his father ; and since to such blessing in the patriarchal age the most unbounded efficacy of result was ever attached, he hopes by this means to recover from his brother all the advantages which his wilful compact had forfeited. He appears carefully to withhold from his father the knowledge of this shameful barter of the birth-right : in this concealment, apparently to spare the feelings both of Esau and of Isaac, Jacob acquiesces ; and of this acquiescence of the younger brother, in which Rebecca the mother, though apparently privy to the transaction, participates, the elder wishes to take advantage, to evade the consequence of his own foolish contract, and fraudulently cancel its obligations.

If then, under any dispensation of religion, one indispensable attribute of the honest and acceptable person is, "He that sweareth to his neighbour, and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hinderance," or hurt,—then the character of an upright penitent was far indeed at this time from Esau. For the inseparability of the birthright and the blessing in the proper order and course of things is undeniable, as our apostolical text also indicates ; and this is, as I before remarked, of the greatest importance towards understanding our first evening lesson, and the kind of artifice there practised on the aged patriarch. However we may dis-

like the means employed,—however revolting to the higher morality of the gospel that false simulation should appear which formed the essence of the scheme,—the object was certainly no other than this; to obtain from the error of the infirm Isaac, what it would have been hard to procure from his awakened consciousness; to continue the concealment from him, now enfeebled in body and mind, of that long-standing compact between his two sons, which it would have troubled him greatly to learn; and now that he suddenly desired to give the blessing in his present state—to obtain, as I said, from his error and oversight that blessing of Jacob as the firstborn, which by virtue of the compact was already his right. And this being the state of the case, if Rebecca and Jacob are considered as delinquents, the aggrieved party is not certainly Esau, but Isaac. The aged father might have cause for complaint—from whose cognizance and judgment the whole affair was withdrawn—and who was induced by mere circumvention to give to one a blessing which he in his own mind intended for another. But no just ground of complaint was his, who, having committed a heinous folly, sought to escape its consequences without reparation—to avail himself for this purpose of the ignorance of a sick parent, and violate his own solemn promise and oath.

Now it is not the conduct of Jacob—whose subsequent discipline and well-endured trial occupies the succeeding chapters of Genesis,—it is the conduct of the unhappy elder brother that is

exclusively before us at present. From the day when he parted with his birthright for a mess of pottage, no penitent sense of his awful profaneness had checked his usual reckless course of conduct. He lived among the heathen as though he were one of them; and while the true blessings of an heir of Abraham were all thus slighted and contemned, he still hoped that through the father who loved him, all that he knew or cared for in Abraham's promise might be his notwithstanding—that he might have a rich inheritance and a posterity dominant in Canaan. And now at last, when sickness and extreme infirmity came over Isaac, so that he thought himself at the point of death (though in fact recovered strength and many more years of life were in store for him), it is then with joy that Esau hears the command to hunt and procure venison for his father, and thus approach to receive the blessing from his dying lips. He eagerly enters on the chase, he brings the meat that he had hunted and prepared to his father—his heart beats with confidence of the coming blessing. But he finds it not. His brother had come with subtilty and stolen the blessing—he had left nothing for the elder but a declaration of servitude and inferiority. The subtilty of Jacob had but worked out the performance of the contract that Esau had made with him long before; still more, it had but worked out the purpose of the Divine predestination respecting both, the purpose of Him who, foreseeing their characters and proceedings, had said, “The elder shall serve the

younger:" as it is written, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness¹."

It is then, for the first time, that the remorseful anguish spoken of by the Apostle in my text occurs to the unhappy firstborn. When Esau heard the words of his father, announcing that he had been supplanted, "he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry:"—the exceeding acerbity of feeling consisting doubtless in that consciousness, ever the sorest aggravation of mental suffering, that the cause was from himself; that his own sin had here found him out; that he was now at length tasting the bitter fruit of his profane folly years ago. Not that the justice of this consequence was felt or acknowledged by him: the absence of that feeling, so essential to all genuine and acceptable repentance, is marked strongly in his deportment throughout. It appears principally in this—that, while wrathfully reflecting on his brother, as verifying the name given him at his birth, "the Supplanter," he assigns as two separate instances of this, what a just appreciation of the case would have represented as one. The last instance, however brought about, was but the fair verification of that result to which he had himself, in the first instance, given the fullest consent; and the vengeful hatred it inspired in him was chiefly, or rather solely, on this account; that it defeated, by an unexpected stratagem, the hope that he had enter-

¹ Mal. i. 2—4.

tained, with equal falsehood and presumption, of grasping a blessing to which he was disentitled. And in the exasperation of feeling which this inspires in an ungodly and impenitent heart, he anticipates with satisfaction the time of his father's death; when the time of mourning being past, and all fear of a paternal malediction taken away, he might slay his brother Jacob, and seize on his inheritance.

How, then, in such a man as this, are the words of my text verified, that "he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"? Of repentance in the highest religious sense—*i. e.* of sorrow for his offence against God, against whom, and whom alone, he had sinned, in the first instance, by contemning the Abrahamic promise,—of this he was as destitute as were the worse offenders, Cain and Judas, when the bitterness of their sins overtook them. Neither could he be said to have sought such repentance, or desired that it should be his, either on account of his fornications and profane matrimones, or his impious contempt of the sacred birthright. But he therefore is said to have found no place of repentance, because, in the midst of all the bitter regrets for the past, which are, in a certain sense of the word, repentance, the blessing which true penitence seeks and finds he sought and found not. When he lifted up his voice and wept, when, with frantic pathos, he exclaimed, "Hast thou no blessing left? bless me, even me also, O my father!"—his cries and tears could only draw from the sympathizing Isaac the information

that all was unavailing: that whatever was distinctive of the firstborn was now gone from him for ever; it had passed irretrievably to the younger brother. The sweet fragrance of the field which the Lord had blessed, whose fruit should shake like Libanus, and replenish the nations of the earth, was Jacob's only: to him should nations bow down, and people do service—more fully in the latter days of Christ, and the Church Catholic, than in the temporary conquests of David: to him should the blessing of Abraham descend, and the inheritance of the land where he was a stranger: whereas to the father of the Idumean race no further blessing could be extended than the assurance of abundant nourishment in the rocky land of their inheritance and the promise, at some undefined future time, of emancipation from his brother's yoke. Nor does any hint of spiritual blessing mix with these temporal promises; though Edom was destined to be incorporated, after her second conquest, with the Jewish state and religion—and thus to have the calling of the Gentiles so far anticipated in her behalf. While a never-ceasing race of saints and prophets was to spring from the loins of Jacob, and illuminate the times of Israel's darkest degeneracy, Doeg and the Herods appear but, as it were, the ordinary samples of the race of Esau.

The lesson which the Apostle derives from this sad example is most clear and definite. It is, that we should look diligently not to fail of the grace of God,—a grace which is freely given, and never irresistible; that we, to whom the same grace is

given as to Esau, but in a far higher development, and a more filial dispensation,—we who, as Isaac was, are the children of promise,—who are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,—who have been all baptized into Christ, and have, therefore, put on Christ,—that we should be careful to act on the grace given us, and acknowledge ourselves strangers and sojourners in the region of sorrow and of sin; that we should prize our celestial birth-right as the chief of our possessions, and beware lest for a mouthful of perishable goods we cast it away. And if any root of bitterness have sprung up among us,—if conscience tell us of instances in which the lure of temporal things has led us to make light of what should be infinitely more precious to us than all,—we are instructed to review and diligently repair our error, lest it issue in that unspeakably foolish and awful exchange against which our Saviour has warned us; who has told us, that not the gain of the whole world can countervail the loss of the soul,—that to guard against what should endanger this, it is expedient to cut off the offending right arm, and pluck out the offending right eye. For all acts that tend to that sad result, let us learn, as in this holy season we are reminded, to be penitent and afflict ourselves betimes: let us not go on contentedly, after profanely contemning things eternal for temporal, as if through the bounty of an indulgent Father it would be all the same with us at last; as if we might presume to claim from Him the blessing, after we had sold the birthright. The consequence

of such presumption can only be, that the horrible truth will flash upon us when it is too late, and an exceeding bitter cry will be ours, when the consequences of our folly and sensuality burst upon us in the hour of our extreme need, and we find no place of repentance, though we should seek it carefully with tears. Pardon is indeed promised under the evangelical covenant to repentance; but repentance itself is no ordinary work: to change on a sudden the current of the thoughts and desires, is not in the power of one who has begun in sensuality and continued in presumption, who has grieved and quenched within him the Holy Spirit of God, by whose aiding influence alone he can effectually repent. For thus says the Divine Wisdom to such as these: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof; therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

It is not certainly without reason that in adducing an example from the Old Testament of the

verification of these most awful words,—of a type of all those by whom the first of heavenly privileges, that of baptismal grace, has been wantonly thrown away,—a character like that of Esau should be selected by the Holy Spirit here. Not without reason is the ungodly member of Christ admonished, not by a case of most revolting wickedness, but by the case of one in whom some amiable qualities may be discerned; to whom his father, the good Isaac, would have fain given the blessing of Abraham; whose worst feelings do not by any means reach the most malignant or implacable character; who appears, in the last event recorded of him, to have been restrained, as well by a laudable recurrence of natural feeling, as by the overruling providence of the Most High, from doing or intending harm to his brother. Not without reason, I say, is a good-humoured, reckless hunter of the olden time made the beacon of the careless Christian. For there is no kind of character to which mankind at large are less disposed to attach deep moral guilt than to easy improvidence with respect to futurity: they regard it in something of an amiable light,—as rather a man's misfortune than his fault. But whatever it may be in the blessed season of childhood, when the want of foresight is better supplied by that filial dependence and trust in parents, which we must all imitate towards our Father in heaven,—certain it is, that in adult persons, who do think for themselves, and regard the various objects surrounding them, the disposition which throws off from itself all thought and care of

its highest relations, while lesser objects are merely regarded, evinces its true character of evil: it is the development of the same naughtiness of heart, which at an earlier stage shows itself in the slighter forms of disobedience and prevarication, or deceitful concealment of its ways from those to whom confiding love and reverence are due. Such, however, is the case with multitudes, whom mankind yet count amiable in their want of thought, long after that judgment is approved by God; the amiableness even in man's sight being of a nature to diminish continually. For nothing is worthy of love where self is predominant: the selfish will, whether intent on interest or pleasure, hardens the heart continually towards God and man; and the virtues of better human constitution fade and wither,—they prove themselves unreal as well as transitory,—when unsustained in that Eternal Love whence alone are the living springs of virtue and goodness. The generosity of Esau, the public spirit of Saul, turn alike to bitterness at last, when God, whom they first rejected, had rejected them, and abandoned them to the natural fruit of their own self-will. At the end, if not now, the equity of the divine judgment will be vindicated, even when our human sympathies least avail to discern it.

The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: its enjoyment and its more serious business are both transient and unsatisfying; and while sinful gratifications end in blackness and remorse, the purest pleasures that life affords abound in materials for sharper sorrow. Even these are unblest:

except as they may be made a part of that process by which the soul below is disciplined to a higher state; where all that is evil shall have been cleansed, and all that was here good refined to immortality,—through Him who for this end was incarnate, and lived and died and rose again. All is unblest: except as conducting through Him to God—the God whom our sins provoke to anger, whom our waywardnesses grieve, from whom sensualities and undisciplined passions tend ever to alienate us. Well may we use the words of the most ancient psalmist, Moses the man of God: “Who regardeth the power of thy wrath? For even thereafter as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.” May we turn to account these days of preparation for the Eucharistic season of Easter, by penitent renunciation of all remembered sin: that grieving for it betimes and habitually, we raise not our cry of regret like Esau suddenly at the last,—loud and bitter and unavailing.

SERMON XXIV.

CHRISTIAN LIGHT TO THE PENITENT.

(Preached at St Mary's on the Third Sunday in Lent, Feb. 23, 1845.)

EPHESIANS V. 13, 14.

But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

THERE is no part of subjective religion on which the ancient Church laid greater stress than that of repentance: there is none on which our present popular teaching dwells so little. The fact is sufficiently striking to invite enquiry into its cause as matter of speculation; but far more so when surveyed, as everything in religion ought to be, practically. Is it then that we are more vigorously pursuing the apostolic precept to which I adverted last Sunday, not to lay over again the foundation of repentance from dead works, but, leaving this and the other principles of Christ's doctrine, to go on to perfection? Is it that with us the Christian regeneration is considered as so accomplishing its perfect work—"He that is born of God sinneth not"—that explicit repentance for sin after baptism is less called for than of old? And is it thus through the method indicated by the beloved disciple, *i. e.*

through the excision of that sin whose fruit and whose appropriate remedy lies in fear and godly sorrow, that we have reached in our own esteem that "perfect love which casteth out fear, because fear hath torment"?

No one, I apprehend, will venture to answer these enquiries affirmatively. Strangely as we are disposed to exalt our own spiritual eminence above every other age and people, our self-complacency has taken a quite different direction from that of denying the continuance of sin in the regenerate: it is not the Novatian vaunt of guiltless purity, but the Gnostic boast of superior knowledge of the Gospel, that is raised so loudly and often so fiercely among us. Far from such affirmations as have been supposed, nothing is more characteristic of our current theology as distinct from the old than this; the disposition to overlook or explain away the highest moral representations of the Christian state,—to view the distinctive blessing of the evangelical state as consisting not in the emancipation of the will from sin, but in conscious exemption from its consequences,—to consider our Lord's ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance, as in *every* sense a hypothetical unreality,—to refer the description in St Paul's seventh chapter to the Romans, not as his context requires, to the state of bare legal conviction, but to that regenerate condition to which it is most pointedly contrasted and opposed throughout,—and while all the privileges of judicial exemption are willingly enlarged on, and treated as if they alone were properly

termed the *gospel*, to put the highest statements of evangelic blessedness which we have in St John and elsewhere into another region of thought, or even, what is most preposterous, to refer the grounds on which they rest to the *law*. And this being the case, we are forced on an opposite solution of the phænomenon,—that so little stress is now laid on repentance. Is it not that from a lower estimate of what is attainable under the Gospel, we are become insensible to the guilt of its non-attainment? Is it not that from partial one-sided views of the grace to which we are admitted, we are self-satisfied when we should be ashamed and penitent? Is it not that we overlook one sentiment that wonderfully pervades the declarations of our Lord and his Apostles, viz. that in exact proportion to the height of grace afforded is the awful guilt of falling short of it, of neglecting or abusing or withdrawing from it?

The apostolical passages which formed our theme both on the last Sunday and on the present, may assist our judgments materially on this point. When the Hebrew Christians are exhorted to put away each root of bitterness from among them by earnest repentance, when they are warned by the merited fate of Esau against sacrificing things spiritual for temporal, and then thinking to claim the blessing after selling the birthright; the admonition is immediately enforced by the very circumstance, that they were not under the law, but under grace. “*For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched,*”—to Sinai and its flaming terrors,

on which the inspired author largely dilates; “*but* ye are come to mount Sion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” What then, I beseech you to observe, is the inference from this most remarkable contrast? Is it that, as terror characterized the former covenant, mercy alone should be the object of their regard in the latter? Far otherwise. It is, that as the grace of the latter dispensation infinitely transcends that of the former, so, proportionally, does the terrific peril of disobeying it. For he proceeds; “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth,”—the disobedient Israelite, who murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness,—“much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven,” our once dead and now glorified Saviour. And after one further argument from the immobility of the kingdom which his cross and intercession have opened, he concludes, “Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.” The dread of his consuming wrath must be in proportion to our rest

on his mercy, so long as there is any sin to avoid, or any judgment to deprecate¹.

The same doctrinal sentiments pervade the passage, less awful in the threatening, yet no less earnest in exhortation, which forms this day's Epistle to the then new Christians of Ephesus. From the dignity of their common calling in Jesus Christ, and his infinite love in once offering himself for them as an odoriferous sacrifice to God, St Paul argues the necessity of their walking with God as beloved children, and sedulously mortifying the polluting vices of their heathen state: among which he particularly specifies covetousness, and impurity both in words and deeds. And lest any should allege, either, on the one hand, that their present character of God's children by regeneration exempted them from the possibility of falling under the dominion of vices like these,—or, on the other, that the injunction to avoid these was enforced on real Christians by no distinct penalties of divine vengeance on transgression, but was merely, as some have been found to say, an obligation of gratuitous thankfulness for assured favour; St Paul adds, as gravely and emphatically as if these purely modern errors were taught in his day, and were added to the Gentile sophisms heard in Asia Minor, "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." That wrath is not the less severe,—it is rather aggravated in character,—when the children of disobedience had

¹ Heb. xii. 18—20. (coll. ii. 2, 3; x. 28, 29, 30.)

been admitted as children of grace. He had just appealed to their knowledge, derived from his apostolic teaching, "that no fornicator, or impure person, or covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God." If admitted by baptism to that fellowship, its rights of inheritance are withdrawn and cancelled by the admission of such deadly sin: he has sold his birthright to the adversary; nor can he, without earnest practical penitence, recover it.

From this then proceeds the exhortation which I have proposed for our particular meditation at this time; in which the same points are urged, but under a different imagery, and with most powerful and awakening considerations superadded. The Ephesians are reminded that they are now, by baptismal illumination, children of the light and of the day; that this light irreconcilably opposes and reproves the unfruitful works of darkness. To every fruitful work of the Spirit, all acceptable goodness and righteousness and truth, this is an ample and sufficient direction, to walk *as children of the light*,—the light which penetrates the darkest recesses of the heart,—and which, beaming from Christ the Sun of righteousness, can awake from a torpidity like that of death. Let us then endeavour, in our poor measure, to realize this great Christian idea: first considering this light in itself, and in its source; and then in its application to the awakened and converted sinner.

First, then, let us consider this light—this great moral light, in itself, and in its own Essential Source.

The all-comprehending truth derived by St John from intimate converse with Him who was Light of light, the incarnate Word of Life, is thus represented by him in opening his first Epistle: "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." That which was the first created substance—itself most beautiful and glorious, and the cause of beauty and glory to all others—is fitly employed to designate that moral purity in which God dwells. That which, existing eminently in its luminous source, subsists likewise in every place of its diffusion,—that which, without discription of its unity, is present alike in all these, though vanishing at once from all as soon as its source is withdrawn,—that in which alone we discern the forms and relations and bearings of the most distant substances, which, without it are necessarily concealed and unknown,—this agent well serves to express the energy of that Eternal and Omnipresent One, himself not one with, but the cause of, all other being,—in whom alone all inferior essences subsist, and are manifested in their true relations to the inferior intelligences of His creatures. As to observe these relations duly, and be affected accordingly,—to see all things as they are in God, and as in their constant subordination to Him they stand severally related to ourselves;—

is the essence of all moral rectitude—so is this most fitly called to *walk in the light*; in the Prophet's language, *to walk in the light of the Lord*; or, as the Psalmist expresses it, in *His light to see light*, with whom is the well-spring of life eternal¹.

Accordingly, in divine revelation, even in those remains of it which heathen nations have preserved, the two antagonist powers which are struggling for the mastery in this world, are described as the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness: the one including, under the all-perfect Creator, all his pure and blessed offspring; the other, all evil and depraved and apostate creatures. In that system of Gentile worship which contained within it most elements of truth, and whose ministers were honoured with the first celestial notice of the true Light at its manifestation, this notion of the rival kingdoms forms the predominant feature of their cosmogony. In one point they erred, and the error was a material one—in ascribing to the region of darkness and confusion a substantial origination analogous to the pure kingdom of the Most High—giving to darkness a positive essence, and assuming an evil creator with essentially evil natures emanating from and holding from him. No such unreal and impossible theory as this is required to account for the evil dominion we witness in this lower world. For as darkness is nothing else whatever but the absence of light; and the mere withdrawal of that source of perception and joy is abundantly sufficient to produce the gloom, the dismal disorder

¹ 1 John i. 20. Isai. ii. 5. Ps. xxxvi. 9.

and wretchedness, that is implied in a realm of utter darkness,—so it is with the evil kingdom expressed under that significant image. To the fullest conception of that utter confusion and misery that is involved in the dominion of sin no more than negation is necessary: the exclusion of that blessed influence of the One Only Creator and first Cause, by whom all is retained in life and light and happiness. That influence once suspended or intercepted, no longer is God discerned in his own supreme goodness,—no longer in those reflexions of his bounty through which the hearts of his creatures should ascend from lower relations to the knowledge of Him. With blindness or defective perception of these things are associated, in the way both of cause and consequence, all inordinate desires, all envy and pride, contention and hatred, and every evil work. Thus was it with those wretched beings whose first fall from a higher state of being than ours has made them our seducers to evil; the evils in them aggravated by their more purely intellectual nature, still more by desperation, the exclusion of all hope of salvation. In the rebellion which their apostate pride has organized lies that kingdom of darkness,—that rule of the prince of the powers of the air,—that compact kingdom of Satan—of which we heard the divine testimony in this day's gospel: the dominion under which the reprobate world lies enslaved, and from which a mightier than Satan has alone redeemed us¹.

¹ Luke xi. 14—22.

To this representation of the negative character of spiritual darkness we have the sure testimonies of the sacred writers. Let us hear him whose eagle eyes, most constantly pointed to the Sun of righteousness, enabled him most clearly to apprehend both the light and the darkness it opposes: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." Hear again that Sun of righteousness himself, who, in terms almost the same as are thus repeated by St John, speaks of that miserable blindness, as to their whole course and being and destiny, which in the Jews he addressed was the fruit of their corrupt passions, while it tended to confirm and perpetuate them. Still more distinctly had he said to his own followers: "Take heed that the light which is in *you* be not darkness. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Far worse than felt and acknowledged darkness is that delusive light which shows things under false colours and in untrue proportions; which seeing not things in the light of God, but as the world wrongly views them apart from Him,—without reference to the spiritual creation ever encircling us—to eternity, to heaven or hell,—can only produce a wisdom more pernicious

¹ 1 John iv. 8; ii. 11; coll. John xii. 35, 36. Luke xi. 35. Matt. vi.

than acknowledged folly; a wisdom whose very subtilty and intelligence ensnares its possessor, and lures him farther away from the paths of true virtue and happiness.

To reprove these deep disorders of erring humanity,—whether issuing in the revolting licentiousnesses of heathenism, to which St Paul alludes in my text, or in any other moral evils,—the Divine Wisdom has various methods of conviction, though the source of correction and recovery is but one. “All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” Whatever there be of ethical or political truth which correctly ascertains the mutual relations and duties of mankind, and in so doing convicts their violators of moral turpitude, it is in that proportion a light from God, however elaborated by man. Still more is this true of that higher speculation, of which the heathen mind has shewn itself not incapable, into things divine and unearthly; as far as such speculation has really unfolded the truth of the divine formation and disposal of things; as far as with a correct enunciation of God’s moral attributes and perfections, it manifests also, by the same light, his righteous displeasure against transgression. But far more is this verified in the more explicit certain knowledge of these cardinal points of natural religion, with which God favoured his chosen servants of old: the sacred histories and awful judgments by which they were repeatedly illustrated, and the holy ordinances by which their unchanging truth and perpetual applica-

tion was enforced, from age to age, on the chosen seed of Abraham. All these, I repeat, are light from God: to manifest and reprove what is displeasing to Him: but the best and highest of these, if they extended not beyond mere law, were ineffectual *except* for reproof: they might convict, but they could not convert. The law of God, received as a merely external witness of his character and will, would leave untouched the stronghold of sin in the heart of man. Nay more, in proportion as this law, unattended by restoring grace, went deep to the conscience of the sinner, and in so doing revealed a commandment that he had violated, and sanctions which he could not satisfy, it would only irritate the corruption within, and make him who was before a comparatively ignorant offender, a conscious and a desperate one. At best, it could only issue in that miserably ineffectual conflict which St Paul describes in that seventh chapter of his great doctrinal epistle; which, while inducing an intellectual condemnation of sin, yet leaves the convinced man in captivity—in habitual and most wretched captivity—to the law of sin in his members,—a prey to guilt and eternal death. No better fruit could be educed from it than the exclamation, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?” a question to which no mere law supplies the answer; which the free grace of Almighty God in Christ alone does solve and satisfy.

For, thanks be to God, the light which reproves sin does not come thus unattended with spiritual grace to the Christian. Not without some hopeful

apprehension of the great grace yet unrealized, did the convincing and reproving law come to thousands of old,—as patriarchs and prophets testify, with all those saints of the elder dispensation, in whom, however, imperfect in kind, a better obedience was accomplished than such ever bootless warfare with corruption. Not without somewhat of the same hope, we trust, did these convictions come even to the better Gentiles, whose experience such passages more nearly touch: enough was there, as St Paul expressly declared at Athens, to make them seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him; and thus partake a benefit whose One incarnate channel was unknown. But to us most certainly the light by which sin is reformed and the sleeper awakened to repentance, comes not as a mere law,—it comes not to commit men to unsuccessful combats with sin and despairing cries for deliverance. For, as St Paul tells in the next chapter, all that the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, has been now actually supplied: the condemnation of sin in the flesh has been effected by one mighty to save us also; and the exhortation to rise from sin comes not to us from a law of carnal ordinances and of death, but from the law of the Spirit of life.

“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and CHRIST shall give thee light.” The illuminator is here the Uncreated Light, the Image of the invisible God, the essential radiation of the divine glory,—Light of Light, very God of very God,—who shines in our hearts by virtue

of his incarnate Presence, his manifestation in our flesh and nature as the Anointed Saviour. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, He who on this first day of the week, the first of creation, once spake by his creative Word, "Let there be light, and there was light,"—did on that same day raise that same Word incarnate from the dead, and thus cause Him to rise as a quickening Spirit, as a Sun of righteousness on the dark world. Let not a tradition of yesterday move us to forget what all Scripture and all history certifies, viz. that this blessed day of the Lord is not the seventh day, but the first: not the sabbath-day when God rested from all the works that he had made, of which the last obligatory recurrence was that paschal sabbath, our Easter Eve, when He rested from the work of our redemption in the dark silence of the grave: it is the first day,—the first, not of creation only, but of a new creation more glorious than the former,—by Him who was at Easter the first-begotten from death; who to this end both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Henceforward the law of God is no longer, as it were, engraven on stones, or an external handwriting of ordinances confronting and witnessing in judgment against us,—it is to be seen embodied in all its living features of justice and infinite goodness in Him who alone fulfilled it perfectly; and by his obedience, even to death, merited for us the grace of rising with Him from death to life. It is no extraneous model, no distant

or infructuous example that we have in this spectacle of incarnate Godhead: it is One who hath made us his own in the laver of regeneration, who has there planted us into the likeness of his atoning death, that we may rise with Him to heavenly life here, and to eternal blessedness hereafter. It is nothing impossible that God exacts of us: to act as He wills, we have but to accept his word, solemnly pledged to us in the first engagement of our lives. He who on earth raised the paralytic man, and restored the dead to life, now utters the breath of his quickening Spirit from the right hand and the glory of the Father, and dispenses it in every channel of his Church's ministration.

Unhappy are we in that this free grace of God in Christ is so little believed, so little apprehended. We neglect God's great mercy, and then we learn to disbelieve it: we either sink in heartless despair of such grace being applicable to us, or we make to ourselves theories to reconcile the state of things which our own general neglect has produced, with the statements we cannot avoid seeing in Scripture: we lower its truth to our level, instead of embracing its terms, and realizing them. When it is found distinctly written, that God's salvation is a gift preceding, in the first instance, every good feeling or motion of our own, and that it is by accepting it as such that we are to walk and to please God; that the word is very nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, the word of faith witnessed by Christ and his apostles; that in Him risen from the dead is our present help and justi-

fication ; that we have neither to rise to heaven for this, nor to plunge into the deep beneath ;—should we not accept, as most fully answering these divine characters, that one occasion of our lives, on which as the same Scripture plainly tells, we were planted into the Lord's death and resurrection? Yet will men rather select for this some instant of more awakened consciousness in themselves. And thus when our own energies, our own feelings, are practically rested on, instead of God's free gift in his Church, then is this falsely termed exalting faith ; as though the province of faith were to create, and not merely to apprehend,—or as though faith could have any more proper exercise than that of realizing the divine promises as once sealed and certified to us in the appointed sacrament of our regeneration.

But it is not merely the presumption of erroneous teaching with which we are here concerned : amidst the confusion of discordant sentiments now unhappily prevalent, much difficulty will be, doubtless, suggested to serious minds by the experience of things within and around them. While maintaining, as faith is ever bound to maintain, "Let God be true, but every man a liar,"—it is never our duty to shut our eyes to the truth of facts, or to deal with things otherwise than as they are. Be it then that the grace once sealed to you has lain as it were dormant or dead,—that it is hard, in consequence, to conceive it as having been *then* imparted ; still you know not what sources of corruption, yet unfelt, it may have prevented from springing forth, nor how far your present aspirations for good may not be referable to

it. But suppose—what may be true, as it is, alas, but too possible,—that the evil influences of the world have benumbed the soul that God had claimed for his own,—that sins have wounded, that habits of evil are cicatrizing it,—and that the holy law of God is, in consequence, seen rather as a confronting enemy without, than as the law of the Spirit of life within. Yet, while there is a heart to bewail this, a spirit to wish with earnestness that it were otherwise with you, think not that all is lost, and the Christian state passed away for the legal or natural one: so long as a penitent desire exists, and a breath of aspiration that may be quickened into a flame, doubt not but that the word uttered for the Ephesian Christians' guidance is addressed also to you; "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

True it is that habitual sin committed under the consciousness of a Christian calling, has far worse effects on the mind than the same sins committed under heathen ignorance: nor are we to put under the same category with the repentance from dead works that must precede the Christian baptism of the convert, that penitent recovery from the lapsed or apostatizing state which belongs to the case I am now considering. It is a defective teaching that overlooks this difference: it is a false teaching that denies it. The willing oblivion of the past, that becomes the former case, is by no means expedient or desirable in the latter: what in the former case is viewed as merged altogether and drowned in the healing waters that the Saviour's wounded

side has opened, requires in the other the perpetual union of our penitent tears with the application of his saving blood; as the only probable measure by which we can judge of our personal pardon, the only security against the evil spirit returning (possibly in another shape), and bringing seven others more wicked with him. Thus has the true Church of God constantly judged; while in benignity to returning penitents as constantly shunning the unfeeling rigour of Montanists or Novatians. Nor will the true penitent himself desire to judge his own case differently. Never will he wish to feel otherwise than as the prophet speaks of the returning Israel,—to remember his own ways, and his doing wherein he has been defiled, and to loathe himself in his own sight for all the evils that he had committed¹. Thus proceeding in true sorrow for the past,—avoiding all precipitancy or excess in its expression at first,—bearing meekly, as a just penalty for the past, the uncertainty and misgiving of mind that naturally and necessarily accompanies the beginnings of penitence,—a better light, a happier tone of mind, will by degrees spring up; a more confirmed aversion of the soul from its past sin; and—though old habits of disobedience will ever leave some bad taint behind—a greater readiness on the whole to the difficult ways of virtue and religion.

It is, alas! no easy matter to repent. To the exceeding pride of man's heart it is a hard and strange work,—and may we not, therefore, truly

¹ Ezek. xx. 43.

add a *rare* one,—to exercise true penitence and self-abhorrence for actions, or courses of action, that have been once contentedly pursued and embraced. It is easy indeed and common for men to forsake a vicious habit when the time for creditably pursuing it is past, retaining all the while a self-complacency in the past, absolutely incompatible with that repentance which must be theirs if they are to be saved. When therefore there is the defiling memory of past cherished offences, be not persuaded by Satan that it is an easy matter, a matter of course, to repent of them: pray rather, as Simon Magus was exhorted by St Peter, for the forgiveness which will only be obtained by true repentance, for one whose heart is not yet right with God; who is yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Well is it to know this betimes, and thus seek place for repentance; and not leave it to be discovered unexpectedly and shamefully before God and his holy angels hereafter.

“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Defer not for a moment, all who have ears to hear the call, the entrance on that blessed course which the universal Church of Christ at this season sets before you. The delay of an instant may be the loss of all: for each delay brings the sleep of carelessness nearer to the death of confirmed sin. “How long,” says the wise man, “wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of sleep?” Often may you thus be called, and with difficulty roused even for a moment

from slumber: but when the joints grow rigid in their inactive state, and a torpor seizes on all within; when no strength or resolution is left for a continuous effort in the ways of God, and through despair of good, all pulse of spiritual life grows faint and ceases to beat at length,—then comes the state, dead in trespasses and sins, when a new revivification is, as the scripture tells, impossible: when the Ethiopian skin admits of no washing, and the leopard spots of evil habit are indelible. Such is the state of those who have sinned away their day of grace; who have sinned of wilful determination, after they had obtained the knowledge of the truth: to whom, as the Apostle declares, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” For the day of grace is not past when this call is heard, and while it has power to excite in any degree a responsive sense within. We hear the words of the Apostle St James, addressed to sinners within the Church,—words which should make no conversion appear hopeless: “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.” This, by God’s grace and strength to aid you, you may yet do; and as the season fast passes by, and Easter approaches, let these parallel words of our Apostle St Paul be remembered also:

“And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

NOTES.

NOTE A.

“MANICHÆI dicunt, Deum bonum non omnium naturarum esse creatorem. Pelagiani dicunt, Deum non esse omnium ætatum in hominibus mundatorem, salvatorem, liberatorem. Catholica utrosque redarguit, et contra Manichæos defendens Dei creaturam, ne ab illo instituta negetur ulla natura; et contra Pelagianos, ut in omnibus ætatibus perdita requiratur humana natura. Manichæi carnis concupiscentiam non tanquam accidens vitium, sed tanquam naturam ab æternitate malam vituperant. Pelagiani eam tanquam nullum vitium sed naturale sit bonum, insuper laudant. Catholica utrosque redarguit, Manichæis dicens, *non natura sed vitium est*: Pelagianis dicens, *non a Patre sed ex mundo est*; [1 Joan. ii. 16] ut eam velut malam valetudinem sanari utrique permittant, desinendo illi tanquam insanabilem credere, isti tanquam laudabilem prædicare. Manichæi negant homini bono ex libero arbitrio fuisse initium mali. Pelagiani dicunt etiam hominem malum sufficienter habere liberum arbitrium ad faciendum præceptum bonum. Catholica utrosque redarguit; et illis dicens. *Fecit Deus hominem rectum* [Ecc. vii. 29]: et istis dicens: *Si vos Filius liberaverit, vere liberi eritis* [Joan. viii. 36]. Manichæi dicunt, animam particulam Dei naturæ malæ commixtione habere peccatum. Pelagiani dicunt animam non quidem particulam sed creaturam Dei, etiam in ista corruptibili vita non habere peccatum. Catholica utrosque redarguit, Manichæis dicens: *Aut facite arborem bonum et fructum ejus bonum; aut facite arborem malam et fructum ejus malum* [Matt. xii. 33]; quod non diceretur homini, qui naturam facere non potest, nisi quia peccatum non natura sed vitium est: Pelagianis dicens: *Si dixerimus quia peccatum non habemus, nos ipsos seducimus et veritas in nobis non est* [1 Joan. i. 8]. His morbis inter se contrariis Manichæi Pelagianique configunt dissimili voluntate, simili vanitate; separati opinione diversa, sed propinqui mente perversa. Jam vero gratiam Christi simul oppugnant, baptismum ejus simul evacuant, carnem ejus simul exhonorent, sed etiam hæc modis causisque diversis. Nam

Manichæi meritis naturæ bonæ, Pelagiani autem meritis voluntatis bonæ, perhibent divinitus subveniri. Illi dicunt: Debet hoc Deus laboribus membrorum suorum. Isti dicunt: Debet hoc virtutibus servorum suorum. Utrisque ergo *merces non imputatur secundum gratiam sed secundum debitum* [Rom. iv. 4]. Manichæi lavacrum regenerationis, id est aquam ipsam dicunt esse superfluum, nec prodesse aliquid profano corde contendunt. Pelagiani autem quod in sacro baptismo ad expianda peccata dicitur, nihil opitulari infantibus nullum peccatum habentibus asserunt. Ac per hoc, in parvulis baptizandis, Manichæi visibile destruunt elementum, Pelagiani etiam invisibile sacramentum. Manichæi carnem Christi exhonorent, partum Virginis blasphemando; Pelagiani autem carnem redemptorum carni Redemptoris æquando. Propterea quippe natus est Christus, non utique in carne peccati, sed in similitudine carnis peccati, quia cæterorum hominum nascitur caro peccati. Manichæi ergo, omnem carnem penitus detestantes, auferunt carni Christi perspicuam veritatem. Pelagiani vero nullam carnem peccati nasci asseverantes, auferunt carni Christi propriam dignitatem. Desinant itaque Pelagiani Catholicis objectare quod non sunt, nec ideo se velint haberi amabiles, quia odioso Manichæorum adversantur errori, sed merito se agnoscant odibiles quia suum non aversantur errorem. Posunt enim duo errores inter se esse contrarii, sed ambo sunt detestandi, quia sunt ambo contrarii veritati." D. August. contra duas Epistolas Pelagianorum, Lib. II. cap. 2.

The application of these several false principles to the matter of our present reference may easily be conceived. The Manichæans with their affiliated sects, whether called Paulicians, Publicarii, or Albigenses, denounced marriage as the work of the evil principle, essentially impure and unholy: a sentiment which the Catholic Church, from the Synod of Gangra downward, has ever abhorred and anathematized. The Pelagians, on the other hand, whose sentiments as represented by their champion Julian may be seen in St Augustin's six books against him, deny any impurity to belong to that which since the fall of man humanity labours to conceal. To more recent ultra Pelagianisms on this head—and the assertions of paradisiacal shamelessness as proper for our present condition, which have been advanced by the Woolstoncrafts, &c., it is enough to allude.

NOTE B.

IT is in the Gallican Church of the twelfth century that the opinion was first manifested which dared to extend to her who conceived without stain the Eternal Son of God, the prerogative of a like immaculate conception for herself. The festival of the 8th of December, then instituted in a single see of France, has since become universal in the Churches of the Roman obedience, though the doctrine that could alone justify its observance has never been there authoritatively enjoined as a part of the Catholic faith. But of the uncatholic nature both of the doctrine and the observance, as they appeared to the most devout and earnest spirits of the time and in the same part of the western Church, we cannot have a stronger proof than in the terms of the letter addressed on this occasion by the illustrious abbot of Clairvaux to the canons of Lyons.

D. Bernardi Epistola CLXXIV. "Inter Ecclesias Galliæ constat profecto Lugdunensem hactenus præeminuisse sicut dignitate sedis, sic honestis studiis et laudabilibus institutis. Ubi enim æque viguit disciplinæ censura, morum gravitas, maturitas consiliorum, auctoritatis pondus, antiquitatis insigne? Præsertim in officiis Ecclesiasticis haud facile unquam repentinis visa est novitatibus acquiescere, nec se aliquando juvenili passa est decolorari levitate. Unde miramur satis quid visum fuerit hoc tempore quibusdam vestrum voluisse mutare colorem optimum, novam inducendo celebritatem, quam ritus Ecclesiæ nescit, non probat ratio, non commendat antiqua traditio. Nunquid Patribus doctiores aut devotiores sumus? Periculose præsumimus quicquid ipsorum in talibus prudentia præterivit. Nec vero id tale est quod, nisi prætereundum fuerit, Patrum quiverit omnino diligentiam præteriisse."

In discussing the reason of the case with the introducers of the novel festival, St Bernard proceeds to observe that the perfection of that highly favoured among women from whom the Divine Saviour derived his human flesh and nature, and even the immunity from actual sin which he believes to have distinguished her, was secured quite sufficiently by such a sanctification from the womb, as the Scripture testifies of Jeremiah and of John the Baptist—without predicating of her conception that immaculateness which belongs only to that of her Divine Son. He sums up thus: "*Lego denique Spiritum Sanctum in eam non cum ea venisse, dicente Angelo Spiritus Sanctus superveniet*

in te. Et si licet loqui quod Ecclesia sentit et verum ipsa sentit, dico gloriosam de Spiritu Sancto concepisse, non autem et conceptam fuisse: dico peperisse virginem, non tamen et partam a virgine. Alioquin ubi erit prærogativa matris Domini, qua singulariter creditur exultare et munere prolis et integritate carnis, si tantundem dederis et matri ipsius? Non est hoc Virginem honorare, sed honori detrahere. Si igitur ante conceptum sui sanctificari minime potuit, quoniam non erat; sed nec in ipso quidem conceptu, propter peccatum quod inerat, restat ut post conceptum in utero jam existens, sanctificationem accepisse credatur; quæ excluso peccato, sanctam fecerit nativitatem, non tamen et conceptionem. Quamobrem, etsi quibus vel paucis filiorum hominum datum est cum sanctitate nasci, non autem et concipi: **UT UNI SERVARETUR SANCTI PRÆROGATIVA CONCEPTUS QUI OMNES SANCTIFICARET, SOLUSQUE ABSQUE PECCATO VENIENS, PURGATIONEM FACERET PECCATORUM. SOLUS ITAQUE DOMINUS JESUS DE SPIRITU SANCTO CONCEPTUS, QUIA SOLUS ET ANTE CONCEPTUM SANCTUS.** Quo excepto, de cætero universos respicit ex Adam natos, quod unus humiliter de semet ipso ac veraciter confitetur: *In iniquitatibus inquam, conceptus sum: et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.* Cum hæc ita se habeant, quænam jam erit festivæ ratio conceptionis? Quo pacto, inquam, aut sanctus asseretur conceptus, qui de Spiritu Sancto non est, ne dicam de peccato est, aut festus habebitur qui minime sanctus est? Libenter gloriosa hoc honore carebit, quo vel peccatum honorari, vel falsa induci videtur sanctitas. Alioquin nulla ei ratione placebit **CONTRA ECCLESIAE RITUM PRÆSUMPTA NOVITAS, MATER TEMERITATIS, SOROR SUPERSTITIONIS, FILIA LEVITATIS.**"

Notwithstanding this severe denunciation, by this most eminent saint and doctor, of the novelty, the irreverent levity and superstition of this observance,—notwithstanding the repetition of the same sentiments after his time by men of note and authority, as Petrus Cellensis, Joannes Belet, and the eminent schoolman and bishop Gul. Durandus,—notwithstanding the determination of the Angelic Doctor himself against the doctrine (*Summa Theologiæ*, part III. quæst. 27, artt. 1, 2), and the zealous espousal of the same cause by all the Dominican schools,—yet the contrary opinion of Duns Scotus and the Franciscans gained ground continually, both in the popular mind, and with the authorities, as the following chronological summary of the case will shew.

A. D. 1387. The University of Paris formally condemned

certain propositions denying the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

1439. The schismatical Council of Basil, in its 36th session, declared the belief in the immaculate conception to be reasonable, scriptural, and catholic.

1477. Pope Sixtus IV. granted certain indulgences to those who attended mass at the festival, Dec. 8, to which, however, he does not attach the title of *Conceptio immaculata Virginis*, but *immaculatæ*.

1483. The same pope, by another bull, denounced, under pain of excommunication, the itinerant preachers (evidently of the Dominican order) who denounced the opinion of the immaculate conception of the Virgin as heresy: and proscribing, in like manner, those who maintained, on the other hand, that to deny that doctrine was heresy or mortal sin. This pontiff, though himself a Franciscan, here publicly declared that nothing was decided on this head by the Roman see.

1497. The University of Paris decreed, notwithstanding, to admit none to the degree of doctor in theology who did not swear to maintain the doctrine of the immaculate conception, and to degrade every one of their doctors who should be a deserter of that cause (*ad hostes Virginis transfuga*); having previously forced to recant a Dominican member of their body who had preached against the doctrine at Dieppe. These zealous Sorbonists, however, confessed that their ancestors of the preceding age had most wisely suspended their judgments on this question, when it began to be agitated in the Church, till both sides had been considered: "*Spiritu Sancto scilicet ejus rei veritatem aliquando propalari volente.*"

1509. The case of the prior and three others of a Dominican convent at Berne, who attempted to oppose the doctrine by getting up visions and pretended revelations from the Virgin herself to a half-witted lay-brother, and who were publicly burnt for their impious proceedings, contributed still more to ruin the negative side in the popular mind.

1546. The Council of Trent, in its 5th session of June in that year, confirmed the ambiguous pontifical decision of 1483, by annexing these words to their assertion of the universality of original sin. "*Declarat tamen hæc ipsa Sancta Synodus, non esse suæ intentionis, comprehendere in hoc decreto ubi de peccato originali agitur, beatam et immaculatam Virginem Mariam, Dei genitricem; sed observandas esse constitutiones felicitis recordationis Sixti Papæ IV., sub pœnis in eis constitutioni-*

bus contentis, quas innovat." (These penalties being inflicted as well on those who declared the denial of her immaculate conception to be heresy, as those who thus denounced the assertion of it.)

1570. Pope Pius V. issued a bull forbidding to censure either the opinion which affirmed, or that which denied, the immaculate conception of Mary.

1617. Pope Paul V. having been importunately requested by King Philip III. of Spain to decide this question, answered merely by renewing the prohibition of his predecessors, Sixtus IV. and Pius V., against those who condemned either the assertors or deniers of the doctrine as heretics: and by taking the further partial step of prohibiting the negative side to be maintained publicly in sermons, theses, or otherwise.

1622. Pope Gregory XV., on being further importuned to the same effect by the Spanish king Philip IV., gave no further satisfaction than his predecessor; only extending the prohibition of public theses to private disputations also *against* the doctrine, except among the Dominicans when entirely among themselves in their convents. He also formally forbade the title of *Conceptio immaculata* to be prefixed to the mass of Dec. 8. [This title, however, was prefixed to a weekly office allowed by Benedict XIII. to the Austrians, though the phrase is carefully excluded from the prayers themselves.]

1671. Pope Alexander VII., while declaring the devotion of Dec. 8 to be pious, prohibited also the censure of those who denied the Virgin's immaculate conception.

Hence in the Roman obedience, as the matter is stated by Alban Butler, while it is severely forbidden to impugn this doctrine, or to dispute and write against it,—“nevertheless it is forbid to rank it among articles of faith defined by the Church, or to censure those who *privately* hold the contrary.” (Lives of the Saints, Dec. 8).

The result of the preceding survey may be thus stated. The Roman Church, though impelled by influences of no common power in that direction, has been, by God's mercy, preserved from defining as Catholic truth this most unscriptural tenet, the exemption of the Virgin Mother from original sin: she has, on the contrary, strongly prohibited its being so considered: though she has not been prevented from nurturing as well as countenancing the tenet; by withholding, and even authoritatively censuring, that denunciation and condemnation of it, as false and irreverent, which every Catholic Father would have given as decisively and unhesitatingly as St Bernard. As this last assertion

is of great moment, a few testimonies in proof of it may properly conclude the present note.

None of the ancient Fathers appear to have gone further in this direction than St Augustin: who with respect to the immunity from actual sin, which the heresiarch Pelagius had attributed to the holy Virgin and some other saints, declared even in the heat of that controversy, that he was content to waive that point with respect to *her*, and to suppose that the Almighty may have vouchsafed her such grace, through the merits of Him whom she engendered, as to have preserved her from all conscious violation of the divine laws¹. In this we have, however doubtfully proposed, an approach towards those assertions of the sinless perfection of the Virgin, which we have in Aquinas and the other schoolmen, and to which we see no approach, but on the contrary much apparent contradiction, in other Fathers. Yet is St Augustin as far as Aquinas, or Bernard, or even Basil, from admitting the supposition that the original stain of humanity could be denied except by heretics to extend to the holy Virgin, as to all of the human race beside One. Nothing can be more express on this subject than these words of his fifth book against Julian the Pelagian, ch. 15. Referring to Rom. viii. (*ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας*), he says: "Quod si dementis est dicere et sine dubio caro Christi non est caro peccati, sed similis carni peccati; quid restat ut intelligamus, nisi *EA* excepta, OMNEM reliquam humanam carnem esse peccati? Et hinc apparet eam concupiscenciam per quam Christus concipi noluit fuisse in genere humano propaginem mali: quia Mariæ corpus, QUAMVIS INDE VENERIT, TAMEN NON EAM TRAJECIT IN CORPUS QUOD NON INDE CONCEPIT. Cæterum corpus Christi inde dictum esse *in similitudine carnis peccati*, quia omnis alia humana caro peccati est, quisquis negat, et carnem Christi ita carni comparat nascentium hominum cæterorum ut asserat utramque esse puritatis æqualis, detestandus hæreticus invenitur."

The ancients did not generally hold themselves obliged to esteem the Blessed Virgin as freed by the eminent sanctification

¹ De Natura et gratia, cap. 36: "Deinde commemorat [Pelagius] eos qui non modo non peccasse, verum etiam juste vixisse referuntur, Abel, Enoch, Melchisedech . . . Elizabeth, ipsam etiam Domini ac Salvatoris nostri matrem, quam, dicit, sine peccato confiteri necesse est pietati. Excepta itaque sancta Virgine Maria, de qua propter honorem Domini nullam prorsus, ubi de peccatis agitur, habere volo quæstionem, (*unde enim scimus quid ei plus gratiæ collatum fuerit ad vincendum omni ea parte peccatum, quæ concipere ac parere meruit quem constat nullum habere peccatum?*)" hac ergo Virgino excepta, si omnes illos, etc. etc.

that was doubtless hers, from every human fault or error. St Chrysostom, for instance, in commenting on the several transactions of Matt. xii. 46 and John ii. 3, scruples not to ascribe to her such defects of faith as might be the result of ordinary maternal feelings under unusual circumstances, and even to suggest that she may have shared in some slight degree the carnal ambition of the less believing brethren in John vii. 3, who urged Jesus to display his powers to the world. Yet more remarkable in this view is the great St Basil's commentary on the words of Simeon in our present text: where, interpreting the *sword* that should pass through Mary's soul, to be that discernment of the thoughts and intents of the heart which is described by a similar image in Heb. iv. 12, (Ῥομφαίαν δὲ λέγει τὸν λόγον τὸν πειραστικόν, τὸν κριτικόν τῶν ἐνθυμήσεων, τὸν διῆκνούνμενον ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς τε καὶ πνεύματος, ἀρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν, κ.τ.λ.) he proceeds to find the accomplishment of the prediction in this; that even she who had heard the annunciation of Gabriel, and received into her inmost heart the faith of that divine incarnation of which she was the instrument, did not escape the scandal and offence which the awful crisis of the cross brought on the disciples: even her heart was penetrated and searched with painful misgivings, only removed soon after by the resurrection. (S. Basilii Cæs. Epist. 260. ad *Optimum*, Opp. tom. III. p. 580, ed. Par.) It is without reason that the Benedictine editors append a condemnatory note to this, as a shockingly derogatory sentiment, and probably derived from sources of questionable orthodoxy. The same idea may be found, not only in Origen's commentary on St Luke, but in the *Quæstiones in V. et N. T.* bearing the name of St Augustin, and erroneously quoted by Erasmus as that Father's in commenting on this passage of the Gospel, though undoubtedly proceeding from an equally ancient author. In qu. 73, we read, "*Et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius, ut revelentur mullorum cordium cogitationes* hoc utique significavit, quia etiam Maria, per quam gestum mysterium Incarnationis Salvatoris, in morte Domini dubitaret, ita tamen ut in resurrectione firmaretur; omnes stupore quodam in morte Domini dubitarent. Quis enim non ambigeret, videns eum qui se Filium Dei dicebat sic humiliatum ut usque ad mortem descenderet?"

To vindicate this exposition of Simeon's *sword* as consistent with orthodoxy, is not however necessarily to admit its truth. The allegation of Heb. iv. 12 in this place, which we find also in St

Ambrose's commentary on Luc. ii. 35, (though he does not refer it to any doubt in Mary's mind, but rather to her discernment of the celestial mystery,) is surely chargeable with over refinement; arising, in the last-mentioned Father's case, from the conviction, which the general tradition of the Church inspired, that no literal sword of martyrdom ever pierced Mary. For neither does the *μάχαιρα δίστομος* of the Epistle present the same image exactly as the Thracian *ρομφαία* of the Gospel; nor does the absence of such a material piercing of the Blessed Virgin (which some had falsely deduced from this prediction of Simeon, as we read in Epiphanius, Hær. lxxviii. c. 23) induce the least necessity of such ultra-spiritualizing as this. There is no doubt that the *sword* is best understood, as the mass of both Greek and Latin Fathers have understood it, of the sharp excruciating grief which, without supposing any wavering of faith, necessarily pierced the soul of the Virgin mother during the extremity of contradictory blasphemy at the crucifixion: *Ῥομφαίαν δὲ ὠνόμασε τὴν τμητικωτάτην καὶ ὀξείαν ὁδύνην, ἣτις διήλθε τὴν καρδίαν τῆς θεομήτορος, ὅτε ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς προσήλωθη τῷ σταυρῷ.* (Euthym. Zigaben. in loc.) Or, as the author (probably Sophronius) of the discourse ad Paulam et Eustochium de Assumptione Mariæ, inserted in St Jerom's works: "*Quod vere passa sit, testatur Simeon Propheta loquens ad eam: Et tuam ipsius, inquit, animam pertransibit gladius. Alii namque Sancti...passi sunt pro Christo in carne...Beata vero Dei genitrix...quia spiritualiter et caro ejus passa est gladio passionis Christi, plus quam martyr fuit.*"

There are some who, in their zeal against mediæval imaginations, are pleased to repeat and amplify an unhappy suggestion of Lightfoot, (Horæ Heb. in Luc. ii. 24) that, since of the two turtle-doves sacrificed on this occasion, one was, by the law of Moses, a *trespass*-offering, this argued personal sin in Mary, according to the tenor of the fourth and fifth chapters of Leviticus. But there are worse evils in religion than even the justly reprobated propensity to mythicize the Evangelical history: and we may well suspect that acquiescence in dry forensic views of the Incarnation, that could patiently admit a sentiment like the above, in conjunction with that adorable mystery. When it is considered that the trespass for which the law exacted this particular offering, was one which attached to the offerer, not as a daughter of Eve, (as such persons must in charity be understood to imagine,) but solely *as a mother* like her,—that the impurity expiated concerned *the birth* alone, as the twelfth chapter of

Leviticus demonstrates, the birth-sin of Ps. li. 5,—and that, in this instance, the birth is one which all but the very worst heretics among Christians unite in recognizing as most holy and pure and without spot of sin,—how is it possible for any Christian to avoid confessing what is expressed sup. p. 403, viz. that this piacular offering was made by the Theotokos, not because of any guilt really incurred by her on that occasion, but as part of the oeconomy by which all guilt is expiated? On *this* point, whatever may be truly found on others, there is no difference between the most ancient Fathers* and Bonaventure or Scotus. The notion that for this Immaculate Nativity a really expiatory purification was needed, would be rejected by the first, no less than by the last, as heretical and impious.

This is not the place to enter, even cursorily, into the consideration of the epithets Θεοτόκος and Ἀειπαρθένος, the former involving an article of necessary faith, the other of most pious opinion, among catholic Christians from the first. On the latter I have elsewhere† discussed the evangelical testimony, and shewn the true sense of our Church to be that of Taylor, Pearson, &c. &c. not that of Whitby and his followers.

* e.g. S. Basil. Comment. in Esaiam. cap. 7. Ἐκ παρθένου τóινον ἁγίας ὁ Ἐμμανουήλ, τῆς εἰπούσης, Πῶς ἔσται μοι τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω; Πρὸς ἣν ὁ ἄγγελος, ὅτι Πνεῦμα Κυρίου ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ, καὶ δύναμις Ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοί. Αὕτη ὑπόδικος οὐκ ἔστι τῷ περὶ καθαρισμοῦ νόμῳ. Γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν τῷ Δευτερονομίῳ, ὅτι Γυνὴ ἥτις ἂν σπερματισθῇ καὶ τέκῃ ἄρσεν, ἀκάθαρτος ἔσται ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας. Αὕτη δὲ ἐπειδὴ μὴ σπερματισθεῖσα ἐγένετο μήτηρ τοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, καθαρὰ καὶ ἁγία καὶ ἀμίαντος ἔστι (καὶ μετὰ τὸ γενέσθαι μητέρα, ἔτι παρθένος διαμένουσα.) Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ὁ πρῶτος Ἀδὰμ οὐ τῇ ἐξ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς συνόδῳ παρῆλθεν εἰς γένεσιν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀνέπλασθη καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ τὴν ἐκείνου φθορὰν ἀνακαινίζων, ἐν τῇ παρθενικῇ μήτρᾳ διαπλασθὲν τὸ σῶμα ἔλαβεν, ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὁμοιώματι γένηται τῷ τῆς ἀμαρτίας διὰ σαρκός. (S. Bas. M. Opp. tom. i. p. 764. ed. Par. 1839.)

† Christian Advocate's publication for 1843. "The accounts of our Lord's Brethren in the N. T. vindicated against mythical Interpreters." p. 301—310.



